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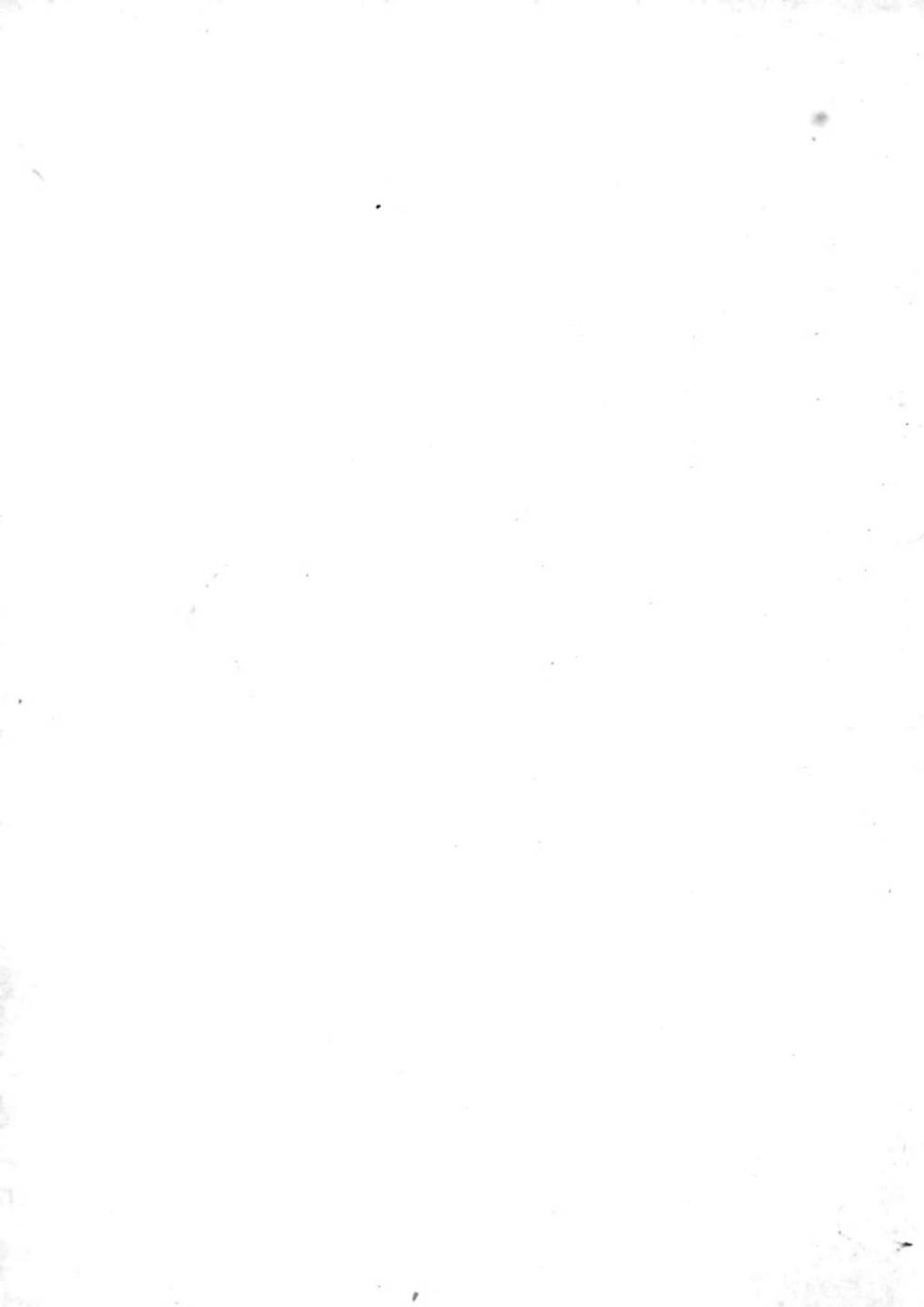
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Miss M. Green

years.

J. G. Green



THE

HOUSE WITH SPECTACLES

BY

LEORA BETTISON ROBINSON

11

NEW YORK

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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1876.

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THE
HOUSE WITH SPECTACLES.

CHAPTER I.

HOME-FOLKS.

“O I am just too glad!” said Ashley, just in time to slip her hand into Than’s, as the boys were going out of the side alley.

“Glad of what?” asked Than, stopping short.

“We are going a-fishing!” said Ashley with an exultant nod.

“We?—You’re not going. Girls don’t go fishing,” said Than.

“Why?”

“O, cause!”

“Cause what, Than?”

“Because—well—because they don’t. They

stay at home like good little girls, and kiss their brothers good-bye, and run back into the house like good girls, and wait, and their brothers bring home some nice fish for them."

"I don't want any fish—I want to *go*. Just let me go Than—please!" she begged so pleadingly.

"No, no I can't, Ashley. Run in, won't you. Girls don't go fishing. It would scare them. There now,—good-bye."

"O, Than, I want to go!" cried Ashley in piteous tone.

"Well, you're not going," said Than sharply, and all the boys hurried away.

"Ain't you glad, you ain't a girl?" asked David with a sympathetic sigh, and all the boys said "yes," heartily.

Ashley did not run in. She sat down on the front door steps, put her chin into her hands, and thought it over. It seemed hard. She had always played with her brothers, why was there now something from which she was excluded?

"Girls don't go a-fishing, Than said.—I won't be a girl, I'm tired of being a girl!" And she jumped up and ran into her father's drug store,

which was adjoining, "Father please to give me some twine," she said, as she stood on her tiptoes and played with the bright brass scales.

"Is that enough? What are you going to do with it?" asked her father breaking off a yard or more.

"I am going a-fishing."

"Fishing, are you? Well, bring me home a nice cat for supper."

"I'm not going to catch cats, I'm going a-fishing, father," she said gravely.

She went out trailing the string after her, and her father smiled, little thinking where that bit of twine would lead her.

Ashley's next step was to go into the hall where her father's cane stood. She took the stick, and with great difficulty tied on the string. Louis had shown her how to fish in a washtub. When her fishing tackle was made ready, she set it down in the corner and ran up stairs into the boys' room.

"My land, Ashley, what is you a-doin?" exclaimed Dinah the housemaid as she passed through the room in a great hurry a few moments later.

"I'm a-tryin' on these pantaloons."

Dinah grinned and went on. No one ever interfered much with Ashley.

"These must be Than's, I suppose," said Ashley stumbling along in breeches whose worn out knees let her feet through while the rest of the legs dragged behind, "I'll try another pair."

She sat down and tugged away at them with all her might. "I'll not be a girl any longer, I'll be a boy, mother's got another girl, anyhow!" She gave a strong pull and her shoe came off in the breeches. "I can't wear Than's, that's sure," she said hunting out her shoe. "I'll have to take Louis'—I'm almost as tall as Louis—Oh there's a pair now. Let's see! which is front and which is back—now this is right—no—well, these are not like Than's. There now I've got them on. Now these look nice, I wish I could see in the glass—but no matter, I must hurry—but I must have a jacket. Now there! Oh, yes—and a hat. Well, now I'm all right. Than won't know me, will he? I'm so glad I'm a boy! I'll get my fish pole, and then I'll show father."

She walked down stairs talking to herself. She met no one, and taking her fishing rod, she stepped out into the street, as beautiful and as proud a little chap as ever lived.

“There now, father is not here!” she said, looking into the drug store. “He don’t know what a nice little boy he’s got. Never mind, just wait till I get some fish for him! I wish I had thought of this before. I like it. Wonder what makes people look at me so! Don’t know me, I suppose—that’s it. Wonder if I can get over before that cart comes.”

On, on, she went, not knowing where, but starting off in the same direction she had seen her brothers going.. She was out in a great city, and only knew she was “going a-fishing.”

CHAPTER II.

LOST.

A N old red brick house, with three stories and a garret, in the busiest street of a great city--this was all to dull, unimaginative people. It seemed to them--that dingy old house in that street of palaces--as much out of place, as some little stray wanderer that had suddenly found itself in the midst of grand company, with its shabby clothes on; but it really had the best right there of any house around, for it had stood in that fair street with others of its kind, when the stone and marble buildings that reared their heads so proudly now, were yet in the quarries.

To people with good imaginations, the old-fashioned house with its broad, hospitable, comfortable look, suggesting bright hearth-stones and the laughter of children, had an expression (houses do have expressions,) in which there was something human. What were those wide win-

dows in the second story, but the kindly eyes of some old grandam beaming down on you? And those dormer windows perked up upon the roof—what could they be but the old lady's spectacles thrown back on her cap? And that little, dusty, iron porch that hung out from between the eyes—you thought in a minute of a nose whose owner was not over neat in her snuff-taking.

The house was part store, part dwelling. And however dingy the old house looked outside—one peep into that store, with its crystal jars, its clean shelves, its cases of perfumery, almost tempted one to be ill, it looked so inviting; but invalids were not the only customers who drew upon the stock below, and kept the family above in bread and butter—the school-children came far out of their way to buy sponges and lead-pencils, for the druggist never forgot to throw in a bit of licorice or tolu.

So much for the store. The dwelling whose entrance was a wide hall at the side, was the only dwelling in the neighborhood. The hurrying feet of business had crowded out all other homes for squares; but here the temple of home

was destined to be kept sacred for years to come. The druggist's large family and increasing expenses did not permit him to grow richer, and to tear the old house down, build here a marble front and a brown stone dwelling on a fashionable street, was an idle dream that he and his wife talked over sometimes.

Several hours had passed. It just occurred to Mrs. Sprague, who was sitting by the bedside of her youngest child—a frail little flower called Daisy—that the house was unusually still, and suddenly with a thrill of apprehension she rang for Dinah to ask “Where is Ashley?” and soon the cry ran from lip to lip, “Where is Ashley?” “Have you seen Ashley?” Dinah had seen her trying on the boys' old breeches. She did not know where the boys went. The father had seen her—yes. She came to him for a line—going fishing she said ;—but he knew nothing of the boys going.

“ Could she have gone with the boys?” cried the mother terrified at the thought, and still more terrified at the thought of her not being with them.

“ Where have the boys gone?” asked Mr. Sprague.

“ To a pond down here, Than said.”

“ Down where ? ”

“ Oh, I don’t know ! ” cried the mother distractedly, as a low rumble of thunder came upon her ear. “ O, my child ! my child ! ”

“ Mary, don’t do so, I will find the child,” said Mr. Sprague ; and no less anxious than his wife, he hurried off to find the pond that was “ down here.” He found a pond and some boys fishing ; but his children had not been there. There was another pond a half mile away,—perhaps they were there. The boys were interested. They would all hunt.

Mr. Sprague scribbled a note to Nathanael. “ Is Ashley with you ? Hasten home.” He gave this to the most reliable lad, and then hurried back home to see if there was news of the lost child.

Darling petted Ashley ! How her parents’ hearts were bound up in her little being ! Mrs. Sprague was usually strong ; but she had before this all her mother-heart could bear in anxiety for her frail little Daisy. Had not some terrible doom befallen her darling—alone, out in the great dark city ! She was almost wild with the thought. Every moment seemed an hour. The

rain came faster. Every drop fell on her heart with pain.

“ Mary, for my sake, be calm,—for Daisy’s sake,” said Mr. Sprague, yet with trouble marked in every line of his grave face.

“ O, I cannot, I cannot ! If Ashley is gone I shall die.”

“ She is not gone, Mary. Our darling is safe, she is with the boys. This is—”

“ There, is not that—? Yes, the boys, the boys ! ” she cried, and her feet flew faster than her husband’s could follow.

The brothers had come home in high spirits, each of the younger ones with a little string of fish ; but Than was coddling in his arms a small, white, woolly dog, and called out “ Ashley, Ashley, see here ! ”

“ Than, where *is* Ashley ? ” asked his mother, fairly shaking him in her terror.

“ I don’t know,” said he, turning pale.

“ My child, my child ! ” cried the mother now in utter despair.

“ Your sister is lost, boys,” said their father.

The dog, rods, and the fish were dropped, and off the brothers started to join in the search.

The dog stood on its uncertain little legs a moment, just where it had dropped ; then snuffed the fish all over, and at length with much whining made itself at home behind the front door—a poor neglected puppy in that time of anxiety.

“We must have the bell-man,” said Mrs. Sprague.

“How was she dressed?” asked Mr. Sprague.

“Dinah, how was she dressed? See if her bonnet is gone.”

“No’mee, you may be sure she never thought of no bonnet. It’s a hangin’ on the rack. She had on her pink caliker to-day, with a old check apron. I done gwine to dress her for ebenin’, when I miss her, and now her dress and apron’s a lyin’ in the boys’ room on the flo.’ I can’t make out what she’s got on—nothing, I reckon.”

“Nothing! Oh, do go, John, and tell the bell-man, a poor, naked child, who had nobody to take care of her is lost,” sobbed the mother.

It rained steadily. Soon—it seemed an age to the distracted mother—the old bell-man was crying at the corners, “Oh, yes! a little girl lost about five years old! Hadn’t on no dress, and bareheaded!”

CHAPTER III.

THE BELL-MAN.

MEANWHILE, where was Ashley?

She walked on and on. A great many people looked at her. They looked at her because she was so pretty and rosy, and seemed to be so glad she was living; but no one thought of her being lost, she seemed to be a little fellow that knew so well just where he was going.

Her little feet grew weary after a while, but she did not complain. She went bravely on past the houses, and out into the road which led through the green woods, and called Than. She stopped and listened. She came to a mud-puddle on the road side; it looked large to her.

“Why here’s the pond,” she said. “Wonder where the boys have gone! I suppose they are hiding. I’ll fish now.”

She sat down by the puddle under a great branching tree, and threw her line carefully into

the water; but she had no sooner got it into the water than she jerked it out.

“ I think that’s a fish now ! ” she said. “ No it wasn’t.” “ There’s one.” “ No, I must wait a while.” It took both hands to hold the pole now, and even then it drooped until it almost touched the water’s edge. “ I do think fish are the tediousest things. I know what I’ll do, I’ll stick it up here, and let it fish itself. Glad I thought of that ? ”

She stuck the head of the cane into the mud, propped it up with some stones, and lay down on the grass to wait for the fish. She was tired ; it was warm, and the fish were tedious. She felt very comfortable.

The branching tree formed a canopy over her. The frogs began their rain song. It might have been her mother’s lullaby, so sweetly did she sleep.

A drop of rain fell into the pool, and set its muddy waters in commotion—another and another; but she was not disturbed by rain, lightning or thunder.

Along the dusky unfrequented road, a young man came riding. He had travelled far that

day, and was urging his tired horse on ; for the end of the journey was near, and the rain was not a pleasant prospect.

“ Get up, John ! ” said he.

The horse stopped suddenly and reared, as if he would rather turn a summersault backwards than advance one inch. His master was about to give him the spurs, when a gleam of lightning revealed something lying just in the road. What was it ? He got down to see,—a child asleep in the rain !

“ Hallo, here ! Wake up little one ! ” said he, shaking the small curled up bundle before him. “ Say, little fellow, what are you doing here ? ”

“ Hum ? ” inquired Ashley, bewildered.

“ What are you doing here, I say ? ”

“ A-fishing, see here, ” opening wide her eyes and grasping her rod.

“ Fishing are you ? And where do you live ? ”

“ At home.”

“ Indeed ! Where is your home ? ”

“ Why don’t you know ? On Fifth street, just by the hotel ; I know where ! ”

“ Do you ! Then come with me, I am a stranger, and you can show me the way to the hotel. What is your name ? ” he asked, much amused.

“ Ashley Don’t.”

“ Ashley Don’t ? Why that can’t be your name.”

“ Yes it is,” she answered stoutly. “ Mother calls me that ten times every day. Everybody calls me Ashley don’t. No matter what I’m doing they say Ashley, don’t.”

“ What’s your father’s name ? ”

“ Father,”—and then added reflectively, “ Mother calls him John.”

“ There now, jump my little man. Here we are. Hold this coat around you—so—now the rain can’t hurt you.”

“ Pugh—rain don’t hurt boys. I used to mind it, when I was a girl,” she said, snuggling up to his breast. “ O, there goes my fish pole ! ”

“ There now, hold it fast.—Did you catch any fish ? ”

“ No, they wouldn’t bite. Wonder if the boys caught any ? ” she added suddenly.

“ Who are the boys ? ”

“My brothers—four of them—Than and Cary and David and Louis. Than’s a great big boy. He’s had more hurts on his toes than any of them. He’s got coat tails!”

“Did he go fishing?”

“They all went long ago. They wouldn’t let me go with them, so I came by myself.”

“Little boy, do you know you are lost? You don’t know where you live.”

“O, yes I do—on Fifth street right by the hotel.”

“Get up, John! I’m so glad I’ve found somebody to show me the way to that hotel. Get up John!”

John had been “getting up” ever since he had been carrying double. Indeed he seemed to take the whole credit of the rescue to himself, and stepped out as proudly as if he knew the value of his burden.

Just then they had to make their way through a rabble of girls and boys, who were following a buggy in which sat a fat, jolly old man, who looked as if he had some pleasant business in life. The next moment he made it known. His buggy stopped, the girls and boys

crowded upon the wheels. A great bell went jangling back and forth, and the fat man cried,

“O yes! a little girl lost about five years old! Had n’t on no dress and bareheaded!”

“Ha! I thought he was going to claim my little boy,” said Ashley’s friend. “Some little girl has run off too.”

“Yes, but you see I haven’t runned off, I just went a-fishing, and I’m not a little girl either.”

“No,” said the gentleman never doubting the last fact. “My good sir,” he asked of a man passing, “can you tell me where Fifth street is?”

“Straight ahead seven streets—runs like this one.”

“Thank you. There comes the bell-man again, Ashley. See—at the next corner. They haven’t found that little girl yet. Ah! it’s a boy this time; listen.”

“O, yes! a little boy lost about ten years old! Had on a straw hat and knickerbockers!”

“That’s you this time, my little man;—but I didn’t think you were so old,” and the stranger put spurs to his horse and galloped after the bell-man who had turned down another street.

The bell-man stopped on hearing the dashing steed behind him. This was a thin bell-man, who looked as if he didn't have a pleasant business in life, and would thank mothers to look after their own children.

"Well I'm glad to see him!" he said gruffly, putting out his arms to take Ashley; but Ashley clung to her protector and cried lustily. "I won't go with him! I'm not his boy. I'm not ten, I'm five."

"Yes, Ashley, but he will take you to your mother. She is very anxious about you," said the stranger, coaxingly, at the same time trying to put her away.

"Think she is!" said the bell-man sharply. "Never see a woman take on so; you'd think this boy was the last of creation to hear her talk! Come on—no time for foolin' here."

"Please don't let him have me! Please don't! You take me to mother—I'll show you the way. I think I know now, right straight," cried Ashley in eager, terrified voice.

"Go on. I'll follow with him," said the stranger to the bell-man, touched by the child's confidence in him.

The procession moved on. The bell-man first, moving along as slowly as though time was nothing to distracted mothers, followed by the stranger with the hero of the occasion, and these again followed by the great rabble of children, who never get lost.

“Never saw this street before,” protested Ashley stoutly. “I don’t live here. I don’t.”

“Here we are,” said the bell-man halting before a splendid house, which looked deserted in the darkness with doors and windows standing wide. The stranger took Ashley in his arms, and followed the bell-man up the marble steps. Ashley kicked and cried and protested in vain.

“They most always cuts up some kind of tantrums,” said the bell-man. “I’ve seen ‘em face their own mothers down: for you see they most always gits whippins, you know. Now who’d think to see this here chap, that he was ten years old. Why, he looks like a baby; but that’s the way—these fine ladies pampers all the growth out of their young ‘uns.”

There was no need to ring; for a lady who was pacing the dark hall, and wringing her hands, flew out to meet them, and clasped the child to

her breast. "Oh, my boy, my boy, my Calvert," she cried.

"I'm not your boy," screamed Ashley, who knew her own mother even in the dark. "You're not my mamma," she cried, kicking out bravely.

"Oh!" shrieked the frantic mother, pushing the child out of her arms. Then she rushed at the bell-man and shook him. "Why don't you bring me my boy? Do you think to deceive me? His own mother? Bring me my Calvert! my Calvert! my Calvert!"

Her voice got higher and higher, and she fell into the arms of her maid.

The stranger, now quite interested in his adventure, took his little friend in charge, and wishing the bell-man better success next time, started out once more on his search for Fifth street.

"Knew I didn't!" said Ashley stoutly. "Guess I know my own mother, and my own house!"

"Is n't your house like that?" asked the young man smiling.

"No it is n't. It's ever so much nicer. It's got a porch and a garret, and looks just like an old woman. Than says it does."

“ Like an old woman ! how is that ? ”

“ Why, you see the little porch sticks right out in the middle like a nose—the windows are eyes, you know, and the dormer windows are “specs” up on top of her head. Oh, our porch is the nicest place ! ”

“ What, do you play on the old lady’s nose ? It’s a wonder she does n’t brush you off.”

“ Yes, Than says it’s lucky the old lady does all her sneezing and winking at night when we are asleep,” she answered gravely. “ There it is now. Don’t you see those great big lamps down there ? That’s the hotel.”

“ And now where is the house ? ”

“ There—don’t you see that house with a nose and spectacles ? There is our drug-store, all shut up ; wönder what’s the matter ! ”

“ The matter is, it’s about nine o’clock at night. There’s a little boy lost, and everybody is off looking for him. Come.” He lifted Ashley to the ground, took her hand, and tried to walk as fast as the little feet ran to the drug-gist’s door. He rang. Anxious, waiting feet obeyed the summons. Mrs. Sprague herself opened the door.

“ Madam, here is your lost boy.”

“ Why, Ashley, my child ! my child ! ” and the mother caught the child to her breast. So surprised, glad, overcome, was she, that she forgot the stranger, while she clasped to her heart again and again, her little one, looking so innocent, so sweet, so absurd.

Then she bethought herself,—“ Will you be kind enough to walk in, sir. I cannot find words to thank you. I should like to hear all about how you found my darling.”

Thus urged the young stranger went in, glad to see more of a family into which he had had such a novel and pleasing introduction.

The good news spread quickly and before he had time to begin his story, the father and brothers heard the glad tidings and rushed into the room.

Then the stranger told his story, and Ashley told hers, and forgetting the anxiety of the last few hours, they all rejoiced together.

Mr. Sprague brought out Daisy, all wrapped up in a blanket, and held her in his arms with a new feeling of thankfulness for his unbroken circle of children ; while Daisy, as if to add to

the joy, had not looked so well for a long time.

“O mother,” said Ashley, patting her mother’s cheek, “I’m all broken down. What does broken down mean?”

“It’s all my fault,” said Than with a sudden gush of remorse, kneeling beside her as she lay on her mother’s lap—“because I was cross to her. I’ve felt bad over it all the evening.”

Ashley patted his head in token of forgiveness. It was a rare thing to see Than so humble.

“Come, Ashley, let’s see what kind of boy you make,” said Cary, gallantly offering his hand.

She got down from her mother’s lap and stepped out proudly before them.

“O, ho! What a boy!” cried Louis, “She’s got my breeches on wrong side before.”

Ashley did not like to be laughed at, and ran and hid herself in her mother’s skirts; while Than sang out as he went off smiling:—

‘I’d like to be a sea gull,
With lovely beak and claws.
I would not like to be a fish,
Subject to fishy laws.

And if they make more changes soon
By acts of Parliament,
I won't consent to be a fish
I never will consent,'—

Well, if I didn't just think!" cried he, stopping short and putting his head back into the parlor, "Mother—my dog? Did you see anything of my dog?"

"No, Than, what dog?"

"Why, a dog a fellow gave me this afternoon. I swapped a whole string of fish for him—a splendid, white, Newfoundland pup,—O, I hope he's not gone! Here pup! Here pup! Here! Here! Here!"

"A dog? O, Than!" said Ashley coming out from her hiding place.

A faint whine answered the call, and in a moment more, Than held his treasure up to the admiring gaze of all.

"What a beauty! O, Than, give him to me," pleaded Ashley.

"No, Ashley, I want to train him."

"What's his name, Than?" asked David, full of interest.

"Let's name him. How would Lion do?"

“O, yes, Lion, Lion,” cried all, the appropriateness of the name striking them at once, seeing the little white, trembling puppy looked so much like a lamb.

The whole train of children followed Than to the kennel, in which Lion was duly installed, although over the door, was the inscription that Than, a year ago, in the pride of his first possession of a dog,—had scratched with a rusty nail.

“tHiS iS TRuSTYs KENiLE NO oTHeR DoGs MuST COME iN HERE.”

But alas for the faithfulness of a first love!—many dogs since Trusty had called that kennel home. The history of the curs that had lived in that kennel would make a book by itself that dogs would weep to read. For with accounts of savory titbits, and appetizing bones would be mingled tales of an exacting young master, and of much standing on hind legs, and drawing of carts,—and of kicks and chains, and muzzles in the dog-days,—to say nothing of the cold poison which had put a tragical end to all their woes.

“I must have a muzzle first thing,” said

Than, as they walked back to the house, when he had made all secure for the night.

“Auzzle?—What’s that?” asked Ashley.

“Don’t you know?—those iron things they put over dogs’ mouths.”

“It’s real mean! How can the poor dogs eat?” exclaimed Ashley indignantly.

“O, we take them off at meal times,” said Than.

“O yes!” said Ashley, “it’s to keep them from eating between meals and spoiling their appetites.”

“Yes,” said Than laughing. “I’m going to tell mother to get one for you.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRUANT.

A SHLEY'S new friend was invited out to the belated supper, gotten up in Aunt Letty's best style ; and he was so comfortable, that it did not require much urging to induce him to remain over night.

His horse was taken care of in the stable, where there was a bountiful supply of corn and oats, and no other beast to share it.

Although he had scarcely reached the age of manhood, the young stranger had a manly bearing, and this with a thoughtful beauty in his fine face joined to a certain ingenuousness of manner, made him seem older, and won confidence at once.

There was nothing to conceal in his past. He was quite young and full of high hope. He talked modestly and yet freely of his plans and of himself. He had just returned from two years study abroad, was pursuing medicine as a

profession, had his diplomas but had never yet practiced ; and indeed, was not satisfied to experiment upon human life without further study and experience.

“ By the way, Mr. Sprague,” said he on rising from the breakfast table, “ I have a letter of introduction from my grandfather to an old physician in your city. Probably, you can put me in his way—Doctor Barr.”

“ Dr. Barr is my family physician. He stands at the very head of the profession here. Indeed, his fame is not confined to our city or even our country. I will gladly introduce you.”

“ Mrs. Sprague, I hope you will let me come sometimes, and have a little glimpse of home,” said Dr. Alden, as he took leave.

“ Indeed, you may. Come to us whenever you will, and you will find a cordial, grateful welcome.”

“ It’s an awful pretty day ! ” said David, with a sigh out of the window, when his father and the young doctor had gone ; for it was school-time, and the awfulness consisted in the contrast between yesterday’s good time, and to-day’s prosiness—school and all that.

The boys gathered their books, and marched off, all, perhaps, more or less reluctantly ; for a half holiday needs a whole day to recruit in. But to David—that little natural school-hater—the vision of yesterday's walk, the cool pond, and the quiet sport came with desire ; and just then appeared the tempter in the form of Jakey Jones, with a fishing rod—Jakey Jones, a good-natured, lazy boy, whose boot toes often turned him away from where he was sent, and soon two little boys were far enough away from all thought of school.

“ Than, where is David ? ” asked the mother at dinner, when the vacant chair betrayed the missing one.

“ He 'll be along directly, no doubt. Why, mother, how quick you miss one. There are only a dozen or so to look after, how can you keep count ? ” said Than, hastening to cover up his confusion by talk, for he did not want to expose David.

But there was an evident something in the looks of all the boys—a look of extraordinary ignorance, that was suspicious.

“ Was David at school this morning, Na-
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thanael?" asked his father sternly. Mr. Sprague always said Nathanael when he was severe.

"Oh, father, I—hem—he's all right—that is, all safe. Don't ask me, please."

"Than," said his mother hastily, for the father was angry, "don't let a false notion of honor keep you from doing your duty to your brother. Has David played truant to-day?"

"It's the first time," said Than, pleadingly.

"I'll thrash him, the rascal!" said Mr. Sprague warmly, for though he was an advocate of moral suasion and did not believe in corporal punishment, yet sometimes, upon the impulse of the moment, he made terrible threats which, however, he seldom executed.

"Mr. Dalrymple will do that," said Mrs. Sprague quickly. "Suppose we take no notice of this first offence at home. If he does so again, I'll not say a word. David knows Mr. Dalrymple will whip him."

"Dalrymple ought to have more moral power over the boys. Any teacher that cannot manage boys without the degrading lash ought to quit teaching. I must speak to Dalrymple about it. But have your own way about this," said

Mr. Sprague, much cooled by the chance of bringing forward his favorite theory.

The day passed quickly—never so quickly, thought the little runaways; and it was with many misgivings that David turned his face homeward. He had played truant. There was no evading the fact. He knew what to expect, for “Old Dal” never let a fellow off without a note; and then there were the home-folks to face—his mother! He wished he had fallen into the pond—not to be drowned, of course, only to be carried home dripping wet, and scare the folks. But he was almost home. They would be sure to notice his blistered face! O, he wished it was over. Sensitive, shrinking as he was, he could hardly force himself on, but at last driven by hunger and fatigue, he went in to meet his fate in a tough, dogged spirit.

They were just going to supper when he slipped in.

“Hurry up, Dave. We’re going to have some games after supper,” said Than heartily.

“I bid for David for my side,” said Cary. David’s mother looked at him with a bright smile. His father was in a capital humor. Louis

begged to sit next him at supper. Ashley slipped some nuts into his hand, and whispered with great emphasis, "Oh, Davy, you missed a mighty good dinner to-day. We came very near having ice-cream."

He was afraid they knew something—they were all so good: but when bed-time came and his mother said her sweet "good night, my son" without one word of reproof, he could hardly help throwing his arms around her neck and confessing all; but his shyness kept him from it, and he went off to bed feeling wretchedly guilty and miserable.

The next morning when he awoke, his fears returned tenfold. There loomed up that terrible flogging. He could not bear it! What should he do? Then there were the possibilities of the morning at home. What might not happen before school time! But the morning meal passed in safety, and he found himself again on the way to school. Oh hateful way! Oh dreaded school!

"Come along, Dave," said Than, striding forward with step as easy as his conscience.

“Don’t know whether I will or not,” said David doggedly, stopping short.

“See here, sir, I’m not going to have this. No brother of mine shall sneak. You come along to school.”

“Old Dal will whip me, Than. I can’t stand it,” whimpered David, every nerve of his shrinking body quivering with fear.

“Of course he will,” agreed Than encouragingly.

“Oh Than, will you let him?”

“Cowards ought to keep out of scrapes.”

“I’m not a coward,” said David, clenching his fist fiercely.

“Then what makes you do a mean thing, and then try to sneak out of the flogging? Come along, I say. I’ll take your whipping, if old Dal will let me. But you just play hookey again and I’ll take you to father, myself.”

“Humph, I’d just like to see you do it. I thought you despised tell-tales.”

“I do. I hate ‘em, but I’d be a tell-tale or anything else to keep my brother from being a sneak. Come on, I say.”

“I’m not going yet. I’ll see about it.”

“Very well, sir, if you don’t come, I’ll come after you.”

Than went off, and David loitered by the way. He saw that he must go to school; Than had declared it. It was nine now, and every minute made matters worse. “That’s a nice looking man coming yonder. Wonder if he has forgotten when he was a boy!” thought David. David had an inspiration. “Please, sir,” said he, going boldly up to the stranger, although he usually shrank from strangers, and he now kept his gaze upon the ground as he dug his toes into the cracks between the bricks, “won’t you write a note for me?”

“To be sure, I will, my little man. Who is your teacher?”

“Mr. Dalrymple.”

“Flogs, does he?” asked the stranger as he took out his note book, and thrusting his foot through an iron railing, began to write upon his knee.

“Yes, *sir*,” said David emphatically, wincing at the mere thought.

“What did you do—play off?”

“Yes *sir*.”

“Can’t you write?”

“Not much.”

“Read writing?”

“No sir.”

“Well here it is. That will make it all right.”

“Oh thank you, sir,” said David, and with a light heart he ran all the way to school.

“Note, sir!” demanded Mr. Dalrymple sternly, as the culprit came in.

David felt secure, and was tantalizingly slow in producing his excuse.

Mr. Dalrymple read the note in amazement, and read it again before he could ask—“Who wrote this?”

“Mother,” said David promptly.

“Are you quite sure?”

“Oh yes, quite sure,” persisted David boldly. What had he to fear?

“Well, then your mother is a sensible person; she says (reading very slowly) ‘Thrash—this—boy—well. He has been playing truant,’ and I must obey your mother’s wishes.”

Poor David, he found anticipation was nothing to reality, when it came to one of old Dal.’s floggings. He never forgot it.

The gentleman to whom David was indebted, passed on chuckling. "Well," he said, "I seem to be destined to take a lively interest in the stray children of this goodly city. Wonder how his mother's note answered! The scamp—he'll not play truant again in a hurry."

CHAPTER V.

DAVID'S KIND FRIEND.

A STIFF hair-cloth sofa—not much as to springs—with wonderful legs, lions' claws peeping out from a shank of flowers, grapes and pears; two card tables with legs to match chairs strong and faithful—black, with leaves of gilt, and wonderful roses across the back; a stout arm-chair, and a smaller one which the children called its wife; a slim-legged book-case, piled with books to the ceiling; a tall mahogany clock with a painted glass door, whereon was a gaudy butterfly hovering over a gilded pine-apple; a staunch three-ply carpet,—all these in a large, low room, with chair boards and venetian blinds, and behold the parlor!

The boys were gathered about one of the tables playing with great interest, a new game of History their father had just bought. Ashley was too little to play such a game, but made it up by running from one to the other for expla-

nations, and bothering the boys not a little; while Daisy lay on the sofa with a picture book.

Mrs. Sprague dropped her work once in a while, to see how the play came on; for the mother of all these children could not sit with idle hands, but was never too busy to take an interest in whatever interested them.

“That is a fine game,” said she, as Than was gathering the cards to deal them again. “I am glad to see you all so interested in it, for you will be learning something at the same time.”

“I didn’t know I was learning anything,” said David, in a disappointed tone, jumping up from the table as if he had been cheated. All his pleasure in the game was at an end.

“Oh, Dave, come back!” said Cary, coaxingly—“it will spoil everything!”

“You won’t learn *much*, Dave,” said Than, laughing; but it was too great a risk, and no coaxing could induce David to play again.

The bell rang, and Doctor Alden was announced.

“Oh, there’s my doctor,” said Ashley, and she ran to him, and took his hand as if he belonged to her.

"Your doctor? I thought I belonged to a boy," said he, eying her with amusement.

"We thought you had forgotten us," said Mrs. Sprague, with a smile of cordial welcome.

"No, no," said he, drawing Ashley to his knee. "I cannot do that; it is too pleasant to have a home where you can even peep in once in a while."

"How do you like our city?" asked Mrs. Sprague after the doctor had delighted them all with incidents of his travels.

"It is a pleasant place to live in! I like it."

"Dr. Barr tells me you are beginning to practice."

"O yes—a kind of practice. It affords the old gentleman a world of amusement. I shall call this the city of adventures. Not a day passes without bringing me some queer experience either serious or ludicrous. Ashley here began it by finding me out on that dark road before I fairly got into the city, and since then something or other has been happening every day: but I seem destined to take the liveliest interest of all in the children of this goodly city. What with bringing them out of

mud puddles, measles, and croup, I have my hands full. Besides that I have to attend to their moral discipline. I gave a little fellow a thrashing the other day; I have felt a little conscience stricken about it ever since, too. It's true he was a little rascal, for he had played truant and wanted to lie out of it,—but he came to me so confidently and said, "won't you please to write me a note?—I—"

"You—" said David rushing upon him in blind fury—so angry he could not speak, as he struck blow after blow, whose force was fortunately weaker by far than David intended it to be.

"Why, David!" cried Mrs. Sprague seizing the arm of the furious boy, astonished; for this was the first she had heard of the matter.

It was but the work of a moment to hold David's hands; and the look of amusement on the doctor's face added insult to injury.

"David," said the doctor, his face settling into gravity as he held the boy's hands, "You must listen to me. I am sorry for this. If I had the note to write again, I should do the same thing; but I would not have betrayed you here, if I had known you."

David was crying and angry, and shook his head threateningly at the doctor ; but his mother took quite a different view of the matter and said,—“ Doctor, how can I thank you ? You have saved two of my children—this one more hopelessly lost than the other. Come with me, David.”

David, muttering and rebellious, followed his mother. “ Stay here my son. Take time to think,” said his mother, closing a door upon him, and returned to her visitor.

The next morning, as Dr. Alden was stepping into his buggy, he felt a gentle pull at his coat, and there was David, trembling yet full of a courage, which surprised even the boy himself.

“ I beg pardon, doctor,—mother told me to tell you,—I am sorry I hit you.”

“ All right, David. Come jump in. Do you like horses ?”

“ Yes *sir*,” said David with emphasis.

“ Drive, I suppose.”

“ Yes.” Now David had never touched reins before in his life, but where is the boy who does not instinctively know all about driving ? David felt a thrill of sympathy run between his fingers and

John's mouth. He braced himself back, and stretched his arms out, until you would have supposed he had at least four high-stepping steeds in hand.

He was all aglow when they drew up at the door, and about as proud as ever he was in his life, when he saw Than at an upper story window observing him driving.

"Now David, what do you say?" asked the doctor as he took the reins, "are we to be friends?—No asking pardons, and all that—just for form's sake, but real sure-enough friends?"

David had forgotten all about his grudge against the doctor; but it really seemed to him he ought to hate him, so he hesitated a minute, hung his head, and then looking frankly into the doctor's face, said not a word and ran into the house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG DOCTOR.

WE have seen enough of Doctor Alden to know that he was one of those fortunate persons born to make friends everywhere.

In Doctor Barr's family his position was soon established; and gradually, as his many good qualities became more fully known, he grew into their love until he seemed to fill there a place death had made vacant years ago—even that of an only son.

“I tell you, Mrs. Sprague,” said the old doctor in his gruff way when he next came to see Daisy, “people come already and want to see Doctor Alden. ‘Doctor Who?’ I thunder at them till they shake in their shoes. Doctor Alden! Humph! I’ve forgotten more than Ned ever knew or his grandfather before him. Better wait till I get done with my old shoes before he jumps into them. Half the young girls in town would rather die now by Doctor Alden’s hand,

than get well by mine. Young, good-looking, you see!" And yet you could tell by the twinkle in his eye, that he was pleased.

"Did you know his family, doctor?"

"All my life,—mother was a splendid woman—father, a scholar—grandfather, glorious old fellow, or used to be. Gout hasn't left him much to glory in, I dare say! He's good stock. Rich?—rich is no word for it, and Ned's the only child."

Doctor Alden, with such rumors afloat concerning him, was not permitted the quiet of his study; but was forced to experiment upon human life in spite of his scruples. However, his patients were mostly those who having arranged silken curtains of a becoming shade, and gowns of the most delicate beauty, could do no less than call in a handsome young doctor to see them. Doctor Barr would have stretched back the curtains, and let in the broad glare of day, would have told the patients to stick out their tongues, and jump out of bed and exercise their muscles with the broomstick or scrubbing brush. Dr. Alden felt their pulses, chatted about pleasant things, wrote in beautiful Latin, prescriptions quite harmless and mostly sugar,—and was dreamed of all night.

CHAPTER VII.

BIG BROTHERS.

“**A**SHLEY,” called Than in a whisper one night as he bent over her bed, and roused her from her first doze, “Ashley, I’m going to put this here under your pillow, and if you are scared, I’ll be ashamed of you.”

A sister—she had come to the boys as something to be loved, and ruled, and snubbed ; but she soon won respect for herself. Even Than, who despised weakness, and took no pains to conceal it, did not despise her ; but still he undertook her tuition as he had that of her brothers, with great zeal. It was a sense of this duty which brought him to her bedside that night.

“What is it, Than ?” asked Ashley, as she sat up in bed, and blinked at him while he arranged her pillow to his notion. “Did the doctor say so ?”

“No, you think Dr. Alden must say every-

thing—it's a dead man's bone," said he, putting all the bass into his voice, that he could muster.

"Will it hurt him, Than?"

"No—nor you, either. Are you afraid?"

"No, Than;" she said, as she laid her innocent head down again comfortably, and tucked her little hand under her rosy cheek, "but there is one kind of *worm* I *am* afraid of, and that's a rattlesnake."

"Well," said Than, somewhat disappointed at the effect of the scare, "this is not a rattlesnake, and besides snakes are not worms."

"Are n't they? I thought they were. Well, I'm glad for the worms," she answered, closing her drowsy lids.

"You don't mind it much now," said Than giving her a rousing shake—"because I'm here with you; but you'll feel awful queer when you wake up in the dark, dark night all by yourself, and think about a dead man's bone under your head!"

In the morning, Than, who felt, after all, somewhat anxious about his experiment, was watching for his little sister.

"How did you sleep, Ashley?" he asked.

“Sleep? I don’t know.”

“ Didn’t have bad dreams ? ”

“ I didn’t dream at all.”

“ And you were not afraid ? ”

“ No, I wasn’t.”

“ Well, you’re a jolly girl!—Here, I must give you something to remember this by,” said he, in a burst of generosity, rapidly slapping all his pockets, and feeling in them for something nice;—but they were in their usual depleted condition, and there was nothing nice in them. “Here, let me see! Well, this will do—anything, you know, to remember it by,” and he put into her hand a copper cent, with a hole in it.

He would have been repaid, could he have seen the look of horror on Dinah’s face, when she unsuspectingly went to make Ashley’s bed. “It’s some of that Than’s work, sho’!” she said, when she recovered breath enough to speak at all. “The mischief’s been in him since the first breath he drawed—and to think of that blessed chil’ a’ sleepin’ all night on a skeleton bone! I know she didn’t sleep a wink. She’d poke her head in the fire, if Than said the word,—“I’ll tell his

mother—sho 's I live ! ” But her anger cooled down, for she loved the boy, in spite of his badness. Instead of going to his mother, therefore, she went after him, and got him to take it away. She wouldn't have touched the thing for the world.

Little did Mrs. Sprague dream of the trial through which Ashley had passed ;—she would have been horrified at the idea of putting the child's courage to such a test. The mother however, knew very little of many things which happened of great interest to the children.

Children in large families educate each other. An only child, hedged in on all sides by a mother's unceasing care, can have the benefit of no such training. Ignorant of responsibility, brothers and sisters go jostling against each other ; they laugh at mistakes, ridicule oddities, and have no patience with babyishness, tattling or other signs of weakness ; they frown upon all affectations, have no sympathy with ignorance, and sharpen each other's wits. They have rights and wrongs which they settle in their own fashion, matters of conscience from which it is a disgrace to swerve, disputes which they decide by

force, a public opinion all their own, which they fear. They fight, they quarrel, they make up, they love, they learn fortitude from each other, and grow unselfish. They are a little world in themselves. In some families, the children form a republic ;—this was an absolute monarchy, and Than was king.

The children had no conception of life without his tyranny ;—neither had he. Invested with all the rights of the first born, he had received each new comer with a calm consciousness of royal power. They all believed in him, and were his true and royal subjects.

What a life he led them! How could they know he was an impostor, and had no right to reign over them? He was first on the ground, claimed the whole domain, and only put up with them on condition of their entire obedience.

That his parents did not know the extent of his power over the younger ones, did not lessen the zest with which he ruled them. His parents saw only his genius, his activity, his mischievousness, which amounted almost to inspiration, and they rejoiced in his brilliant mind ; his sub-

jects felt the power of his domineering spirit which led them into doing all their own tasks and his, too, and which made any task preferable to his displeasure ; and they felt the power of his genius, when he told them ghost stories till their teeth chattered—to improve their courage.

Cary was a beautiful boy—the child of his mother's heart—the one for whom she had a peculiar feeling. This is sometimes a birthright, and remains with the first born ; but more often it is not the first child that calls out the fullness of the mother's love, and she greets babe after babe with what seems to her all the love she has to give, until there is one who moves her heart with a new tenderness, whose first cry is a call upon her sympathy before unknown. The child comes to her, perhaps, at a peculiar time, a time of great sorrow, or a time of great joy, or he comes afflicted, or he comes with a look that appeals to her love, or there is no apparent reason ; but he seems especially sent of heaven. Such was Cary.

David, younger than Cary by two years, had outgrown him, and was aspiring to be equal with

Than himself. David's was a shy, sensitive nature, hard to understand, which gave his mother anxiety; but found its best safeguard in contact with the more robust characters of his brothers, and was thus kept from growing morbid.

Louis was a fair, white-haired, wise-looking little fellow, given to quaint remarks, and in open rebellion against high chairs and bib aprons. He was so like a venerable philosopher, that he won for himself the name Socrates—sometimes degraded into “Old Soc.”

Louis never caused his mother any uneasiness, save the fear that he was too smart to live, a fear with which some mothers needlessly afflict themselves.

As for Ashley and Daisy, we must wait and see how they develop under Than's training.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEASLES.

A SHLEY had grown several years older, had been in love, had been cruelly separated from a boy with long yellow curls, and an adorable little green jacket, had been sent to a school where there were a hundred girls, and not one boy—had had a world of experience—but she wanted the measles so badly, she could n't wait; so she went to the bed and said, “Put me in bed. I'm so sick. Send for Doctor Alden—he's my doctor.”

She wanted to know how it felt to be sick. She had never known anything but good health; while all the little girls she knew, had had whooping-cough, and chicken-pox; and one little girl at school had some scars on her face, and boasted of having had real small-pox. Even boys got sick. Disease after disease came into the neighborhood, into the school, into the family; but seeing Ashley's blooming cheeks, passed by and

took little Daisy, or one of the boys, or the little girl across the street. Ashley could not wait, but said, "Put me in bed. I'm so sick—send for the doctor."

The whole house was alarmed. Ashley sick! Run for the doctor. Cary's little legs fairly flew, and it was not long before he returned with Dr. Alden. David was watching at the front door for them, Than was at the head of the stairs, striding up and down with troubled face, and upbraiding himself with all the mean things he had ever done to Ashley—for her groans were pitiful to hear. Lion was following him, all alive with sympathy; Mr. and Mrs. Sprague were hanging over the bed, while Louis and Daisy stood apart in awful anxiety.

Every one felt hopeful at the sight of the doctor, "There he comes!" cried David at the door. "There he comes!" echoed Than at the stairs. Lion barked and scampered ahead of him to the sick room. "There he comes!" said Mrs. Sprague, encouragingly, to the child—but Ashley only groaned again, and looked towards the door.

"What is the matter with my little boy to-

day?" asked the doctor when he had kissed his little patient.

"Measles, doctor," said Ashley in a sick voice.

"I hope not," said the doctor, cheerily, as he felt her pulse and skin.

"Oh! Oh! I feel like I'm made of brass, my throat's so rusty. Oh! oh!—Don't I holler loud? Oh my!"

"What hurts you, Ashley?" asked the doctor in a tone whose indifference grated upon the over-wrought feelings of the anxious mother. For Mrs. Sprague was all mother; from the top of her shell comb to the sole of her little slipper, every energy and attribute of her being was in the service of her children,—as that same slipper could, itself, testify, from being so often called upon in the administration of family discipline. The careless tones of the doctor jarred upon her.

"What hurts you Ashley?" he asked again.

"I don't know! Oh! oh!"

"What do you think you would like to eat now?"

"I want some pineapple, and some bananas, and some oranges, and some ice-cream, and some—"

"Isn't that enough for one time? I can bring all but the ice-cream, but you will have to get well enough to walk, to get that."

"I believe I'll get up now,—so here comes one little foot, and here comes the other."

"No, my daughter," interrupted the mother, "you must lie still, until you get better."

"Let her get up, Mrs. Sprague. It has been a very slight attack of measles," said Dr. Alden, casting a mirthful glance at Mr. Sprague, who left the room, smiling, "Come, Ashley Don't, we will go and get that good medicine, ourselves."

"Is it possible she is not sick, doctor?"

"Not now, I never saw her better. Come Ashley, there's a young lady waiting for me, about as ill as you are."

"No, doctor, I cannot let her go. I must see that she understands the evil of this behavior," said Mrs. Sprague.

"Just a childish whim—Don't punish her," whispered the doctor in irresistible, pleading tone. "Good-bye, Ashley, we shall have that good medicine yet."

Ashley just now fully comprehended that

she was not going, and began to cry. Her mother took her hand and led her into her own room. There she took the child on her lap and tried to show her that she had done wrong.

“ You know, my child, that telling stories is sinful, don’t you ? ”

“ Yes, mother,” said Ashley with a furtive glance at her mother’s slipper.

“ You know, if my little girl told stories it would almost break my heart ? ”

“ Yes, mother,”—with another glance at the slipper.

“ Now what you have done to-day is not exactly story telling, but something like it.”

Ashley was becoming interested—perhaps the slipper would not be necessary after all—she sat upright and looked at her mother, through her tears. “ It is something like it. It was deception. You made us all believe what was not so. You made your father, and mother, and brothers, and dear little sister suffer with thinking our darling was very sick—that was deception. Now, do you know what deception is ? ”

“ Yes, mother, it’s same as fooling.”

“ Do you know how wrong it is ? ”

"Yes, mother, it's very wrong; but it's not so bad as telling stories—telling stories and being blind, are the two worstest things of all," said Ashley, with comical earnestness.

"People cannot help being blind, but the least little girl can help deceiving. Will you try, my child, never to do so again?"

"Yes, mother, I didn't want to scare you. I just wanted the measles, because all the little girls have had them but me, and when they brag about what they've had, I never have anything to tell."

Just at that moment, there was a loud ring at the door. Ashley hopped out of her mother's lap, and ran to the window. "Oh, mother," she cried, "there's the most beautiful carriage with footmen, horses, and gold harness, and blue-coats and tall hats, and such a splendid lady inside."

Mrs. Sprague hastened to the window, and was greatly surprised at the sight, and not so much surprised at the coach, as she was to see from her peep-hole in the front shutters, the elegant occupant of the coach descend, and not so much surprised at that, as she was to read

upon the dainty card which the servant brought in, the name of Mrs. J. M. Snyder.

Mrs. J. M. Snyder was the wife of the great banker, J. M. Snyder, the richest man in town. She belonged to the same church that Mrs. Sprague did, but was so very rich and stylish, that Mrs. Sprague had heretofore escaped her notice. What could be the object of this visit?

“Mrs. Sprague, I presume,” said the visitor on Mrs. Sprague’s entrance. “I have long been promising myself the pleasure of a call. Our pastor urges me, frequently, to my church duties, but my dear Mrs. Sprague, I am sure you can realize, how utterly helpless I am, hedged in as I am continually by the requirements of society. I have company constantly, and the duties of a hostess must be met. My ancestors were famous for their hospitality. It is a trait that characterizes Virginia’s first families, but, preëminently, the Calvert family, my grandfather was General Calvert—of course, you know of him!—Mr. Snyder has been talking some time about our Calvert’s going to school. We have always had a private tutor for him, who seems to me, to be all that could be wished. He never seeks to be

officious, or use force with my son ; but gently urges him on, and lets him have his own way, which I think is just the right way to deal with so sensitive a nature ; for my dear boy is a peculiar child, he can be coaxed to anything—driven to nothing. It has been my one endeavor to keep him pure, and I do not feel I owe it to a mother's partiality, when I say I am well repaid.

“ But Mr. Snyder is not satisfied ; he says Calvert must go to school. It is dreadful to me—he is only just eleven years of age ; but ever since dear Calvert was lost—some months ago, when the dear boy was but ten—you ought to have seen the specimen the horrid bell-man brought me for my boy, and I was so wild with grief, I seized the child without knowing it—and my own Calvert was not found for an hour after. Mr. Snyder was mortified, that a boy of his—ten years old should have the bell-man after him in the city where he was born and reared. Ever since then he has set his foot down, and says Calvert must go to school. He says men are made in public schools ; not mewed up in the house like girls. He may be right—I hope he

is,—men are sometimes, don't you think? It may be I do spoil Calvert a little,—but you know a mother's feelings.

“They say Mr. Dalrymple whips too. If he should ever touch my boy with his vulgar strap! I don't know—but I do think I could not answer for the consequences! I do so dread to have my boy mingle with the common herd at the schools. The children seem to be low, and rough, and dirty, and barefooted. Calvert never had dirty hands in his life. I think it is dreadful. You should see his nails. Our family are noted for their finger nails. Calvert had a great uncle whose finger nails were taken as a model for a statue, by an eminent sculptor. Then, my dear Mrs. Sprague, since Calvert must go to school, I am anxious he should choose his associates amongst the best there. I have made diligent inquiry among the teachers and others, and, on all sides, your sons are spoken of as high principled boys. Already Calvert has formed an attachment to one—Cary I think he calls him, Calvert is a good boy; it has been my one endeavor to preserve his purity of heart. I was speaking to Doctor Barr about the matter and he

said yours were rare boys, but Cary was the masterpiece."

"They are all good boys," said Mrs. Sprague.

"I have no doubt of it, but my one endeavor has been to gratify my dear Calvert's wishes, and his heart has led him to your Cary."

"David is—"

"I have no doubt they are all noble boys but"—

"You should see my Louis."

"I hope to see them all. Can you let Cary spend next Saturday at our house?"

"I can see no objection," said Mrs. Sprague, who had hesitated only long enough to build an air castle, wherein Cary was president of a bank, and to consider whether he had a suit fit to visit such fine company in. As it was, she seized the first chance she had to put in a word about her boys; but this not being the most interesting of subjects to Mrs. Snyder, that lady took friendly leave, satisfied as to the real object of her visit —the home and the mother of her son's friend.

When Saturday came, Cary was brushed and combed with care, and started off to see his new friend, for whom he had taken a great liking,—

amid a freshet of cautions and counsels ; but he was not a boy to make himself ridiculous in any company, and his mother felt great confidence in his power to win his way. He only said on his return, that he had had a splendid day.

“Did you see his sister, Cary?” asked Ashley.

“No.”

“I have seen her at church,” said Daisy “and she is so proud that she walks lame with prideness.”

“Or tight shoes,” suggested Than, who had his own opinion of girls.

When Calvert returned this visit, Cary took that fine young gentleman over the house, throwing open door after door to his inspection, saying, “This is mother’s room—this is the parlor,” for Calvert had shown Cary over his elegant house and grounds, and now Cary, honest boy, was returning the compliment ; and throwing open the doors of his plain home, said, “This is the dining-room—this is sister’s room—the kitchen is down stairs, you don’t want to see that, do you ?—for Aunt Letty ! I tell you, she won’t have boys around. She’s singing, ‘ Oh, hendermenot, for I will serve the Lord ’ to-day.

Don't you hear the quirk in the high notes? When she's singing that, we don't dare go near. That means 'keep out of my kitchen!' She won't make our paste, or cook our frog's legs or anything. But she's got two tunes, and when she ain't singing this one, she's sure to be singing the other—'Where, oh where, are the Hebrew children?' and then we can do as we please—and here is our room. Mother is going to fit up a little room for Than all to himself, he is getting so big."

"Where is your drawing-room?" asked Calvert.

"Haven't got any, but we have a garret."

"Pugh! so have we," answered Calvert.

"But our garret is the *nicest* place! Come let's go there. Why didn't you come sooner, Calvert? I've been looking for you an hour," asked Cary, as they mounted the stairs.

"Couldn't—they think they must be *stylish* up there, get up at nine, and breakfast at ten."

It was not long before Calvert, too, thought that garret better than any drawing-room; and he spent much of his time there in play with his young friends.

He was a fair, slight boy, dressed rather childishly for his age—with a pleasant, handsome face. He was strictly honorable, high-minded, and polite; and although inclined to be indolent from being pampered, he had much native genius, and soon became a favorite with the whole house. He took genuine pleasure in all the sports of the children, and enjoyed a doughnut cooked for them between meals, on “Where, oh where” days, with as much zest as though he did not fare sumptuously every day. He even got Aunt Letty to let him heat a poker in her fire one day, when “Oh, hendermenot” was being warbled in its very highest key—a feat that even Than would not have attempted.

CHAPTER IX.

MAKING BELIEVE.

SOON came the vacation days at home,—the joyous, boisterous days, when the children were like so many wild colts, and the only peace and quiet Mrs. Sprague had, was when they were all away off up in the garret, where she could just hear them at play, and yet with her quick mother's ear, detect the first symptom of a cry or quarrel.

Daisy had grown into a perfect little sprite. "She's a fairy child," Dinah declared. "Everything she puts on turns into silk. Dirt flies all around her and don't tech her, nohow; and she looks just as pretty in cal'ker, as in her Sunday go-to-meetin' suit."

Ashley was the same little romp she had always been. It seemed impossible to lead her along quiet girls' ways. Her mother determined at the very beginning of vacation to "turn a new leaf," with her, and pinned her to a chair to

learn to sew. Ashley fidgeted, and pulled, and stuck her fingers, and sang,

“Mamma I’ve lost my thimble,
My spool has rolled away,
My head is aching dreadfully,
And I want to go and play.”

Her mother thought of her own hard childhood, and looked up with a relenting smile. Ashley clasped her hands in energy, and exclaimed, “O, mother, just *listen* to the boys!”

Her mother took the seam from her hands, and the pin from her apron. The child sprang to her arms, gave her a hearty kiss, and was off and away up two flights of stairs, before the smile left the mother’s face, and a sigh came—a sigh of doubt, and self-accusation, and relief. If that dear mother ever erred it was on the side of love, and patience, and unselfishness. Let us hope her children may never forget this; it ought to be more potent with them than a rod of iron.

What was there in that old garret? Nothing,—but piles of old rubbish, boxes of old clothes, barrels of old pamphlets, and books, and newspapers, old pulleys, and springs, and

wheels, and clocks, remains of their father's inventions, which would have revolutionized the world but for lack of some little thing,—nothing there but rubbish, rubbish, rubbish. A grown person could not have amused himself there an hour, but it was the world to those children. They had what their father had failed to discover, the philosopher's stone—they had fine imaginations.

"Hallo! Here comes the seamstress!" cried Than, as Ashley's head appeared above the steps. "The captive is free! Let's have a jollification! What shall we do?"

"Play menagerie," voted Ashley, springing to Lion's back and trotting around the room, with hands and feet extended. Lion was used to menagerie. Ever since Than had brought him home that night, a meek, shivering puppy, Lion had been used to everything.

"Well," said Than. "There are our old dry-goods boxes for cages, and these wheels are just the things for a chariot. Ashley, run down and get the red shawl—we'll dress this up, and Daisy will ride on it."

"I'll be pony," said David, "and draw the chariot."

“No, you won’t. Louis is pony,—such nice long, white hair—just the thing for a mane. He is sixteen little white ponies all alike. Now run, all get into your places, while I go round with a stick and poke you all up, and talk to the crowd.”

“Where is the crowd, Than?”

“Why here!” said Than, with a great sweep of his hand in the air, “There’s the shawl. Now we’re ready. Come Daisy. Here, ladies and gentlemen, is the Grand, Duplex, Combination, Leviathan Museum, Circus, and Menagerie; and now let me introduce to your notice these sixteen little white ponies, all caught in Lapland in a wild state, and tamed by that world-renowned horse tamer, Rare-up, so that they obey the slightest wish of the tiny hand that holds them.” The “sixteen ponies” pranced around, and shook his mane, to the delight of himself and his mistress. There is no doubt that Louis made sixteen very nice, little, white ponies.

“Gentlemen and ladies,—Miss Alexandria Flowoskyi, the famous pedest—, no, I mean equestrienne, unequaled in the world.” And Ashley rode Lion and jumped through hoops, amid the plaudits of all the caged animals, who forgot they

ought not to laugh, being elephants, and tigers, and giraffes, and sometimes, being two or three different ones in as many seconds: for every time the manager went round the ring, each cage had a new animal in it. It was marvellous what a thrust of his stick would do; for the very same Cary, who was now a lion, roaring as if he would split his throat, the next moment was a bird singing like a nightingale, and the next an owl, looking so wise and making big eyes at every body, and then a hyena, pacing up and down his cage so restlessly—"seeking to devour every thing he came in contact of," as the circus man had said; for Cary had been to the circus, and knew how things ought to be done. He was a valuable menagerie in himself.

David was the elephant, and performed his part well, recognizing at once the difference between false and spurious coin, which his keeper placed before him, and taking kindly to the apples which were given him as part of the programme. "I hope sir," said his keeper, patting his head, "that as a man you will show the same disgust for tobacco that you do as an elephant."

"Cut up more! Calvert, you're too digni-

fied! you don't do the monkey worth a cent!" said Than, giving him a poke.

"Have to change places with the keeper, I think," said Calvert mischievously, "Let me be a giraffe."

"Well, stretch up then!"

"Ough—it puts my neck out of joint. I'm tired of this; let's play store."

"I'll be banker," said Than.

"And I'll be a dry-goods merchant," said David.

"I'll be a milkman!" said Calvert; but this made everybody laugh at him. "Well then—a tobacconist."

"I'll be a watchmaker," said Louis.

"I'll be doctor and druggist," said Cary.

"What shall I be?" asked Ashley.

"You and Daisy be ladies, and come and buy," suggested Than.

"But, I want to keep store too!"

"Then there wouldn't be anybody to buy from us. Here, I'll give you plenty of money, and you come, buy."

Ashley was appeased; what woman would not be with plenty of money to spend! And

this money—it was only broken bits of china, and all had to be taken to the bankers to be valued. He had it all his own way, that Than, and always quit, the richest man.

David put out his corn and beans into little pill boxes, and measured off his dry-goods with a lucifer match—and cried out, “Why don’t you come, and buy from me?”

“We would rather have sugar from Cary’s drug-store,” said Ashley, “but we will come now—you may give me a million yards of that blue satin, and a half a pint of beans. I’m afraid my family will starve, if I don’t get a good lot of beans: but do you sell beans by the yard here? and satin by the pint?” she cried, laughing—for that was just what absent-minded David, confused by the large order, was doing.

“There, I see the doctor at my door. You may send over a pint of satin, and a million yards of beans. My cough is very bad, I must see the doctor,” said Ashley, hurrying away.

Cary made everybody swallow bread pills, and sent in bills large enough to break the banker; but as he spent his money as soon as he

got it, he did not get rich very fast, but did a great deal toward making trade lively.

“Doctor,” said Daisy, coming into his office just then, with her face tied up, for she knew how to play sick, from long experience, “Doctor, I have some teeth I wish you would pull.”

“Do they ache, madam?” asked Dr. Cary, with a great show of interest.

“They are so loose, I’m afraid they’ll drop down my throat when I’m asleep.”

“Well, let me look at them, madam.”

“Ah,” said she, clasping her hands over her mouth, “I’m afraid you *will* pull them—they *are* loose sure enough,” she added, confidentially, through her clasped fingers.

“I thought you wanted them extracted—don’t say pull.”

“You know I was just funning,” said Daisy, with big eyes.

“Just let me look at them, then.”

“I’m afraid you’ll hurt, Cary.”

“Don’t be disrespectful, madam; I’m doctor, if you please. How can I hurt? I have no tweezers.”

“Do you have to have tweezers Ca—Doctor?”

“Oh, no, madam. Only let me tie this string to your tooth. I promise you I will not pull it.”

“Now Cary!” she exclaimed, still hesitating.

“Can’t you believe me? There now! I’ll tie this string to the door knob, and you just wait—directly the tooth will come out?”

“And you won’t touch it?”

“No.”

“Nor anybody?”

“No, I tell you!”

“Won’t it hurt a bit?” she asked still clutching the string with both hands.

“Oh no! Why it will never do, madam, to shut your mouth so—just stand with your mouth wide open, and hands down so—there!”

Dinah just then jerked the door open in her quick way, and Daisy looked with amazement at her tooth dangling from the door knob.

“Ez I live?” cried Dinah, “Did it hurt you, honey? Them boys could fool a pusson out ev their eyes, I do believe! Well, well!”

“It didn’t hurt a bit,” said Daisy in astonishment, feeling the blank place in her mouth.

“It was out before I knew it.”

“There now! am I not a good doctor,

madam?" said Cary, rubbing his hands in his self-satisfied way.

"I 's de dentis pulled that tooth sho'," said Dinah, going out grinning.

Cary's work was but half done; there was another tooth hanging like ripe fruit just ready to drop, but it would be hard to dupe her again.

"Now, Daisy," said he in a cheery, busy way, "you'll let me tie this string to your tooth, and then to this nail in the window; windows can't open, you know; you may just stand there till your tooth comes out. If you don't pull it, nobody else will."

"Well, I won't pull it, you may be sure! Didn't you know Dinah was going to open the door?"

"No indeed! Now just wait—hands down, mouth open—there, that's right. Good morning, madam." The window looked into the hall at the head of the stairs. The next minute Cary ran outside with a big hat on, and cried "boo!" at her, when she jumped back, and the tooth was out.

All the children had stopped to watch the fun; but through all the buying, and selling,

and the novel dentistry, there Louis sat in his little shop, wholly lost to the state of the market, and everything else but his own favorite amusement. He had fastened up the old clocks to the wall. Some of these he could wind, and make run a little, and was never so happy as when, after hours of tinkering, he was rewarded with a genuine tick.

His care was to keep his stock clean and in order; but above all to keep his pendulums going, and never was he too busy to touch up one that was beginning to move lazily.

Calvert was dissatisfied with his business, for he soon discovered that tobacco had no attractions for girls, and that sugar had. Before any one missed him, he had slipped off to the hotel confectionery, and he came back with a fine stock of nuts, candy and oranges. There was no making-believe now. Every one rushed to his stand, and though his prices were enormous, all the money was soon in his purse, and all the good things down the children's throats. A fairy could not have turned the bits of china into sweetmeats sooner than those children did.

Louis happened to look up and spy the last

bit of an orange, disappearing. "Hallo!" he exclaimed, "Got oranges for sale?" and turning to give all his pendulums a new start, came out to find himself, too late. So philosophers are treated.

There was no amusement in the city which was not reproduced in mimicry by these children. The circus, theatre, balls, and even operas, were represented; and once, transgressing as children will when in unrestrained flow of spirits, they held a revival of religion, while their father and mother were gone to prayer-meeting. They hardly knew how the affair originated; but were led on from the singing of some good old hymns, whose familiar cadences attracted Dinah and old Aunt Letty from down stairs, to come up and join in with fervent amens, and hallelujahs. This reminded Than of prayer-meeting, and the transition was easy to a revival. At any rate, he soon found himself exhorting at the top of his lungs, surrounded by his penitent and believing flock, who mourned or sang songs of rejoicing, as they were inclined; for Aunt Letty was, indeed, so carried away that she forgot it was not real, and agonized over the praying children

with tears and groans, and relieved her feelings between times by many an “Amen” and “Bress de Lord!”

“Come, sinners, flee! flee!” cried Than, hoarse with screaming, “Why will you doubt? The mountain of despair is about to fall on you! Hide yourselves,—hide yourselves, from the wrath to come!”

“Glory!” shouted Aunt Letty clapping her hands.

“Why do you stand, when the night is far spent?” screeched Than.

“Amen!” sobbed Dinah.

“I see an old grey-haired man, yet unmoved, tottering on the verge of the tomb; one foot in the grave, he remains a monument of mercy to witness the ingathering of these dear lambs. Oh, old sinner, kneel,—kneel, and let us pray for you before it is everlasting too late!”

Louis looked resentful—Aunt Letty groaned.

“What, aged sinner? Refuse? Refuse still the mercy offered you? Down, lest the wrath of offended justice overtake you. Kneel, even now; *kneel*, I say,—down, I tell you!”

Than’s voice grew higher and higher—he

lost himself in his zeal, and shied the Bible at the obdurate old sinner's head.

Louis dodged it, but rose up in fury, and attacked the preacher with all his might. The mourners all jumped to their feet. Aunt Letty, whose eyes were shut in ecstatic bliss, continued to sway back and forth, and shouted loudly and more loudly, "Roll, Jurden—roll—roll—roll—"

They made an awful uproar, at the height of which, in rushed the neighbors, and were in the midst of it before the children knew it.

"What's the matter here?" asked Deacon Ludlow, catching unlucky David by the arm, and giving him a shake.

"Roll—roll," still sang Aunt Letty, wholly unconscious of any disturbance in the progress of the meeting.

"*You'll* roll, where you don't like, if you don't shut up"—cried Deacon Ludlow, who took the lead in reproof.

"Ro—" Aunt Letty awoke from her trance, and comprehended the situation at once. "What you circumambiatin here for, sir? These chilluns's in my conduction, and I'm well har-

monized to take care of them. We's havin' a melodious time."

"It's a wonder you are not in the station-house, making night hideous with your whooping and yelling. I shall report the whole affair to Mr. Sprague, and see if he allows his family to be a nuisance to the neighborhood. Now get to bed, all of you, and don't let me hear another word, or I'll get the watchman here and have you all in jail, where you ought to be"—And the deacon strode out, followed by the curious rabble who had come in at his heels.

The children stared at each other in blank amazement. Than was the first to speak.

"Old Granny!" said he, contemptuously.

"Well children, you'd better squatulate to bed, I reckon," said Aunt Letty authoritatively, and swinging her great black arms up and down as if she were at the washboard, and had the deacon's head in hand, she strode out singing, "Oh *Hendermenot*."

The children all crept into bed, without much coaxing, and were evidently fast asleep by the time their parents returned. Mrs. Sprague took her nightly round as usual and was somewhat

surprised to find them, every one so early, in such profound slumber—some of them even snored.

Only Daisy, who had been overawed by the Deacon's threats, sat up in bed, stared wildly at her mother and cried, "Will he, mother?—bring the watchman? Don't let him have me, mother, —please don't. I don't want to go to jail."

"No, no, my darling," said the mother, as she felt Daisy's head for fever. Somewhat reassured by the coolness of the brow, she was yet alarmed at the nervous condition, and the continued talk of the little one, about jail and watchmen, and Deacon Ludlow; and taking the child in her arms, she bore her to her own bed, that she might better watch her symptoms. Many times that night the sleepless mother passed her hand over the brow of her darling, and felt renewed apprehension at the words from the lips of the little sleeper—"Don't let him have me, mother!"

She kissed the murmuring lips, drew the child closer in her arms, and gave her assurances, again and again, that nothing should harm her.

Quite early next morning, Deacon Ludlow, whose zeal in reproof was noted, came to Mr.

Sprague, and in no very gentle language told him what he thought of a man who brought up an unruly family—a man who, being a christian himself, let his children do as they pleased and go to ruin, while he was at prayer-meeting.

It is feared Mr. Sprague answered in no very christian spirit. He was mortified beyond expression, and went straight to his wife to consult with her. They concluded to question Than.

“Than, my son, tell us about this disturbance last night.”

“Father—mother”—said Than, looking in great shame from one to the other, “I know we did wrong; but it was just in play—just got into without thinking.”

“What did you do, sir?” asked his father severely.

“Strange how the thing looks by daylight! It seemed so funny last night!” thought Than, but he hesitated only a moment, though confession came hard to his proud nature,—“I am to blame for it, because I must have led the others, though I can’t see how,—it all came about so naturally. We had a revival—mourners up—

shouting—preaching,—you know, mother,—like revival meetings, and oh, mother, I got mad at Louis and threw the Bible at him.”

“ Than !”

“ I did, mother.”

“ Than !” she said, more reproachfully.

“ You trusted me, didn’t you, mother ?” he said, with his heart and eyes full.

“ Oh, my son !”

“ I wonder how it is mother can make a fellow feel so mean,” thought Than.

“ My son,” said his father, “ I don’t know what to do. I fear if your religious training has not made you respect sacred things, any punishment would not.”

“ I do respect religion, father—I am trying to be a Christian,” he said in low tone,—“ but I forgot that. I just thought of the funny side of some of those meetings. I did not mean disrespect. We just got led on in play, and in the excitement of carrying it out well, forgot everything else. I did get mad with Louis, though, and threw the Bible at his head because he wouldn’t kneel ; and I cannot help feeling that was the worst of all.”

"So your mother or I will have to stay at home and watch you—we cannot trust you!"

Than winced—nothing could have hurt him so. "Oh, father," he cried, "Don't say that."

"You may go, my son. We will talk over this matter," said his father sadly.

"I am surprised, indeed!" said Mrs. Sprague, when the boy had gone. "I knew they were full of play, but I did think if they had one strong principle, it was reverence for sacred things."

"Perhaps we look at the matter too seriously, Mary. I confess, I was smarting enough at first under Deacon Ludlow's rebuke, to have thrashed him, and them too, soundly, but on second thought it seems to me that it was only an overflow of animal spirits—mere thoughtlessness! and that any punishment beyond reproof is unnecessary. I like the way Than seems to feel about it."

"I am so sorry Than did it!—and Aunt Letty, she ought to have known better," said Mrs. Sprague, adding after a while, "You think it is an overflow of spirits. Would n't it be well to turn this to use?"

"How so?"

“ You have to hire a great deal of help—putting up inks, extracts, and liniments. You often hire boys no larger than ours, and that money might be saved.”

This was a consideration, for it was not a good place for a drug store, and had it not been for Mr. Sprague’s reputation as a chemist, many a pill would have mouldered harmless in its little box, and many a potion would have wasted its sweetness on the aromatic air, which found their way for weal or woe, to the stomachs of the luckless sick. As it was, the city was sometimes distressingly healthy, and market money seemed a special providence day by day ; but—

“ School ! ” said Mr. Sprague.

“ It need not interfere with school,” said his wife.

“ I will have nothing interfere with school. If I had fifty girls and boys, they should all have an education,” said Mr. Sprague in his extravagant way.

“ It need not interfere with school,” repeated Mrs. Sprague. “ It is vacation, now, but even during school sessions, they have time for play and mischief—why not for work ? Than, you

know, is now almost fifteen. It would do them all good to earn their spending money."

"A good idea, Mary!" said Mr. Sprague.

"Yes, father. I can cut labels," said Ashley, who had come in, in time to hear of the new order of things.

Her mother started on seeing her, and said "Well, Ashley, I can find some work for you in the house." But her father lifted her in his arms and said she was a good child, and should help too.

There stood back in the yard, belonging to the premises a two story house, the upper room of which was used as the liniment room. Of this the children took possession in their new vocation. Here were bottles, bottles, bottles. Great common bottles for the greasy liniments, delicate bright bottles for the fine perfumes and cosmetics,—wide flat bottles for the inks, and tall slim bottles for the extracts,—bottles washed and set to drain—bottles in tubs of water—bottles yet in the straw. Here were corks soaking;—there, were wrappers piled up to the ceiling; and everywhere, a strong smell of the mingled scent of cologne, assafœtida and scorched sealing wax, that was as familiar as life to the chil-

dren; so that in after years they could not pass a drug store without taking an extra sniff just to remind them of home. Never had children so jolly a play room. Calvert joined in the work as heartily as he had in the play, and from having nothing to do at home was delighted to be of use.

Ashley with her so-called sewing-chair established herself in one corner with the scissors and began with the greatest delight to cut and assort from the large sheets, OPODELDOD, PAREGORIC, CINNAMON, PEPPERMINT, LEMON Ex.—OPODELDOD, PAREGORIC, CINNAMON, PEPPERMINT, LEMON Ex.

Daisy was appointed messenger. The children called her Adams' express company and held her liable for damages if the bundles of papers, or the scissors, or the paste pots intrusted to her care, did not go safe.

Ashley soon saw that this was livelier business than the one of her choice, and got Daisy to exchange with her. It seemed nothing could suit her active spirit better than this, for the busy workers wanted a great many things or else invented errands for her; spare time she filled in with splashing in the water, burning

her fingers in the spirit lamp, and making external applications of all the remedies at hand. Then she coaxed Cary to let her learn to seal bottles, and daubed herself all over, till she looked like a foreign letter of state that had been hunting somebody all over the world ; but she could soon do the work as neatly and almost as rapidly as her brother, so that there was not enough to keep them both busy. She next learned from Louis, to paste labels and wrappers, until Than declared she had got to be so stuck up he was afraid she wouldn't know her best friends. At last she tried to learn from David and Than how to fill the bottles. Indeed Than was more than willing to have her relieve him, and while he made a great show of reluctance in teaching her, and expressed his doubts as to her ever being able to do much, he was willing to trust to her stimulated energies, and let her soak herself in the liniment while he made pictures in smoke from a tallow candle on the whitewashed ceiling, or contrived other fresh mischief out of his fertile brain.

Unconsciously Ashley was becoming a very valuable assistant, and was quite in demand whenever there was a rush.

CHAPTER X.

CHEMISTRY.

SO much dabbling in drugs, naturally led the boys, through an awakened curiosity about chemicals, to making experiments for themselves. They made invisible inks, and wrote each other letters; they bought books of magic, and tried all its wonders in order—never quite putting out their eyes by explosions;—they made phosphoric lights, and went into the dark to look like dead people.

One night Than and Cary had some project on hand, which kept them awake after everybody else in the house was asleep. They crept softly out of their beds, where they had been pretending to snore for an hour—held a whispered consultation, and went on tiptoe to Louis and David's bedside, holding a shaded light. They looked at the sleeper—it was David—then at each other, and made their way to the other

side of the bed—David's hair was black enough already!

Louis slept soundly, and well over on his face. They begin—oh, how cautiously! Louis does not even dream the wind is stirring his hair, they brush the beautiful light locks so gently. It is almost done. Now, if Louis would only turn, so that they might treat both sides impartially—he does turn, and opens wide his eyes upon his barbers, who run, stumble over a chair, drop their candle, and fall flat one over the other. The bottle breaks into a thousand pieces. Then, and not till then, did their prank in all its enormity, strike them in its sober aspect.

What could they do! Louis would look too funny with his white and black head; but their dye was gone—so was the carpet, if nitrate of silver could ruin it.

There was nothing to do, but to go to bed and wait with trembling for the morning. How they dreaded it! anticipate it as they would, it had an ugly promise. Oh, if they had only been lucky enough to take ink instead of that terrible dye!—But, then, wouldn't it be fun to see Louis!

Louis was not always awake when he opened his eyes. He was not then. He had no consciousness of what was going on, and only mingled the light, and the presence of somebody near him, in his dream, and turned and slept till morning.

What wonder that Cary pretended to snore, and kept his twitching mouth under the bed-clothes, as he peeped out in the morning at Louis, dressing. David was up, too, sitting on the side of the bed, dangling his long legs in indecision as to whether to take one step more toward his shirt, stretched out on a chair, or not. He had not once looked at Louis. Louis was on his way to the wash-bowl, when an exclamation from David stopped him half-way, and he turned to behold David holding out a shirt, spattered and sprinkled with what appeared to be ink.

“What’s done that?” cried Louis, the first to speak—as one wholly unconcerned in the disaster.

“Hanged if I know!” answered David, and glancing up at his brother he gave a shriek, and pointing at him, stood as if petrified with amazement.

“What’s the matter? what is it?” asked Louis, clutching his extended arm and shaking him.

“Your head!” gasped David.

“What of it?” asked Louis, clapping his hands to his head to reassure himself.

David for answer caught him by the shoulders, and pushed him before him to the glass.

“My—You’ve done this! You know you have!” Louis cried fiercely, and turned on David and kicked and pommelled him savagely. This was too bad! David was too innocent to be angry, and only tried to catch and hold the hands of the infuriated boy; when Cary sprang out of bed, and received as his own the kicks and blows. For Louis was not particular as to whom he hit and did not know the difference between his friends and his enemies.

Than, hearing the noise, and having an uncomfortable suspicion of what was going on, now ran in and joined in the fray. The three elder brothers at length succeeded in holding Louis in something like a state of quiescence, until they could reason with him.

“Don’t be a fool, Lou! It was only a joke!” said Than, encouragingly.

“And you did it, Than?” Louis asked through his tears so reproachfully, that Than thought he could have crawled through the key-hole.

“Yes, Lou,—I didn’t think you would take it so hard,” said Than.

“I did it, too, Louis,” said Cary sorrowfully.

“It’s meaner than a dog,” said Louis struggling to get free, “I’ll pay you for it, if I live.”

“You may, Louis—You may dye my hair red, if you like,—only don’t make such a row about it,” said Than.

“Shouldn’t have to dye it much,” said Louis vindictively.

“Now, Louis, you have paid me. That was ‘the most unkindest cut of all,’” said Than, putting his fingers to his eyes, and throwing away imaginary tear drops.

“Maybe, it will wash out,” suggested David, “Let’s try soap and water.”

“No it won’t,” said Than, shaking his head ruefully; but still he could not help brightening with hope. They took Louis to the bowl and lathered and soused his head, and deceived themselves with the white foam.

“A little water clears us of this deed: How easy is it then!” said Than tragically.

“It’s going—it’s going sure enough,” cried Cary. “Here, boys, you work away at Louis, and I’ll get some of these spots off of the carpet.” Down he went on his knees with the nail brush and soap, and scrubbed all the nap off the carpet in spots, but it was no use—“No use, boys, it’s like the spot on Fatima’s key—it won’t budge—How’s Louis’ head?”

“It’s--variegated,” said Than, standing off and eying him, contemplatively. “No use, Louis. We shall have to take you for Zebra in our next menagerie. Come, don’t make a fuss and I’ll give you anything you want.”

“Your knife?” asked Louis, eagerly, for he had enjoyed his shampooing, and was disposed to drive a bargain.

“No, no, Louis—not that—you know I cannot do without my knife—something else.”

“There’s the bell, boys, and not a fellow got his breeches on!” broke in Cary.

“So it is,” said Than: “let’s hurry, but somehow I hate to go down this morning. I wish I had a headache!”

They were not many minutes getting ready, and going down; but at the parlor door they stopped, and the rest of the family who were within, waiting to begin morning worship, heard such a giggling and snickering as to make them wonder. That threshold was the hardest thing the boys had ever tried to cross, and each was willing to sacrifice all his brothers in the van. Ashley, however, settled the difficulty from the inside, by suddenly stretching the door wide open, and giving a scream.

“What’s the matter?” asked the mother, rushing to the door; then she screamed too, and nobody could understand the matter at all, until the father coming up with his hymn book in his hand, and seeing his son’s plight, knew at once what had been done, and guessed who were the doers.

“Come in, and take your seats,” he said sternly.

The culprits and their victim ranged in, followed by David, who, being shy, looked guiltiest of them all.

“We will attend to this matter after a while,” said their father with a severe look at David,

and began to read the morning lesson. Now it happened that the chapter was part of Matthew fifth; and when their father read, "But I say unto you swear not at all," Than began to hold the corners of his mouth, for he knew what was coming, and felt a disposition to giggle; and when the words came—"Because thou canst not make one hair white or black," there was a suppressed titter among the boys—something between a laugh and a cry—which broke out spasmodically all through the hymn in which their voices usually mingled so sweetly.

Morning worship over, not a word was said by way of reproof. At breakfast, Mrs. Sprague calmly inquired into the matter, and neither father nor mother could repress a smile, as they looked upon their poor disfigured boy, and then upon the young mischievous scamps who had done the wicked deed.

The culprits took heart, and seeing Louis had come to regard it in the light of a joke, and their parents seemed disposed to overlook it, they indulged in some vainglorying in regard to their smartness, so that David would have liked to count himself in the scrape, and was

sorry to find himself with no part or lot in the matter.

That consultation of their father and mother, however, in the parlor after breakfast, was ominous ; and the boys did not feel quite at ease until it was over and their father went down stairs smiling, without a word. They could breathe again, and began getting up their school-books ready to start off.

“Good bye, Louis, I wish I could have a holiday, too,” said Than ; when, just at that moment his father came up stairs again, followed by a clean-faced, rosy Dutchman, with a black box under his arm.

“Come boys,” said Mr. Sprague, and went into the parlor. The mother ran into her own room and shut the door. The man unlocked his black box, and displayed a tray of shears and razors, while he drew out an apron, which he tied about himself after the manner of barbers, and then another large one, which he held up awaiting his victim.

“Here,” said Mr. Sprague, “this is the one.”

The barber did not seem at all astonished at the sight of Louis, but went about his work with

as much coolness as if it were an every day matter to shave heads part black and part white. Louis made no objection to exchanging his piebald head for a bald one, and was soon shorn of his mottled locks, as close as a razor could do it.

Than began to get uneasy, when he saw the man dust off Louis, then stand, holding up the big apron again, as if his work were not all done. Than started toward the door, saying, "It's school-time, father."

"Just wait Than, and see how Cary looks."

"Cary?" he gasped, in blank despair.

"Yes, we are not through yet."

Cary with dismay felt himself under the hands of the stolid barber, being shorn of his curly crop; but with yet greater misgiving did Than look upon the sight. Than! Just at an age to begin to care for his looks. Than! who was flattering himself that Miss Lilla Snyder admired him.

David, too, was much interested in the proceeding, though as one having no personal concern in the affair; and out of mere curiosity he came so near that the barber, who thought it a wholesale job, had Cary finished, and some of

David's hair cropped off, before anybody could speak to prevent it.

"You might as well go on. You've spoiled my beauty, anyhow," said David, good-naturedly, "besides I shall have plenty of company. Bald pates are the fashion."

"Now, Than," said his father, when David was through.

"No, no, father, I can't—it's too bad."

"Nathanael!"

Than knew there was no escape, and set himself in the chair with the best grace he could, and winced under every snip of the shears, as if they cut into his flesh. They cut into his pride, which was more sensitive. He arose, angered, insulted and vindictive, and rushed out of the house with tears in his manly eyes.

His mother hearing his quick step, ran to the stairs and called "Than! Than!" but the banging of the front door drowned her voice. Neither did he hear his father's call from the porch in front; but went round the corner whistling in a don't care manner distressing to see.

The father paid the barber, and sent him off, and then wondered if Than's punishment was

not too great. He thought often that day of his eldest boy; for the thought troubled him. He had punished both alike, and their natures were so different.

What a comical sight to an impartial eye, were those three shaved heads in the parlor! Those little tanned faces set round with rims of white, where the hair had kept it from the sun! But their mother took them all three into her arms, and had never felt them so precious as when the tears she could not restrain fell upon their bare crowns.

Than did not reach the school-house, without having his hat knocked off more than once; and when he entered the school-room, he created a sensation, indeed; but he refused all explanations, and was so savage that the boys let him alone.

Calvert was nearly convulsed when he came to school, after studies had begun, and caught sight of Than the first thing. He stood in the doorway, with his hat in his hand, and his hands crossed before him in such an ecstasy of merriment, that Than almost caught the infection, and came near smiling—but he couldn’t.

"Take your seat, Snyder," said Mr. Dalrymple.

Calvert obeyed, but not without casting sidelong glances at Than's head, as he went. As soon as he could, he twirled a note over to Than—"What's up?"

But Than returned no answer. Then Calvert got permission to speak to him, and came and sat down on the edge of his chair with his arm about him, and whispered, "What did make you do it, Than?"

"None of my doing," said Than gloomily.

"Well, old boy, you do look too funny. Tell a fellow all about it, can't you?"

Than told him, and Calvert was so tickled that he laughed out, slapped his knees, and set the whole school in a titter.

"Snyder, take your seat here on the rostrum," said the master.

Even there, Calvert could not repress his mirth, and chuckled aloud every little while, until the master called him up, and said,— "Your hand, sir!"

To the astonishment of all, Calvert obeyed, and received several stinging strokes on his

palm with a strap. It was the first time the master had had occasion to resort to such measures with him, and the boys had thought Calvert would resent it. But he did not, and succeeded by dint of turning his eyes persistently away from Than, and by dividing their attention between his book and his red palm, in keeping a straight face until recess. By this time the whole story was known, and such a buzzing as there was.

“Ho, Calvert! I didn’t think you’d let old Dal whip you,” said one.

“Oh yes,” said Calvert; “I must take all he gives me.”

“I wouldn’t—I’d let him know whose son I was, if I was you,” said a boy whose only inspiration was the strap—“Won’t you tell your mother?”

“No—she would make such a fuss. I wouldn’t go to a school, and not take what other fellows have to; and then I was to blame;—but Than’s filed and sand-papered head does look so funny.”

All the boys went out to play, and forgot the occurrences of the morning in a game of ball; and, except for his hat’s falling down over his

nose—for it was much too big for his head for want of hair to hold it up—Than would have had no reminder of his shame.

The bell rang, and the boys trooped in from recess. In a moment every eye was turned to the blackboards which were literally covered with caricatures of Than—done in bold and artistic strokes, with much point and stinging ridicule. Mr. Dalrymple could not help noticing so flagrant an offence, and asked, “Who did this?” but there was no answer.

There was but one boy in school with ability enough as artist, as wit, and as sneak; and he was the only one whom Than could at all suspect of being at enmity against him.

John Fairfax had come into the school from down town, and between the “down towners” and “up towners,” there had long been a senseless feud, which needed but a spark to kindle it into a blaze of war. Here was the spark.

John was a clever, ambitious boy, utterly unscrupulous, who thought it necessary to push others down, that he might rise. He took mean advantages of the smaller boys, and was soon looked upon with distrust by most of the school;

but he had his followers—after his kind. Thus insensibly there had been growing up within the school two factions; of one of which Than was the head, of the other, John Fairfax.

Than had never been a fighting boy. Fighting was discouraged at home in such terms, that the boys understood that a street fight, however victorious to themselves, would have a sequel at home of another ending. For these reasons, Than had avoided John, and kept with his own friends, which most of the school were.

All this had not been going on without the teacher's knowledge. He felt the evil influence and knew its source, but John was a sly boy, and took great care to commit no open offence, or else to shield himself behind a barricade of secrecy or lies.

“Who did this?” asked Mr. Dalrymple again. There was perfect silence. Then Than rose, and with swelling chest, and face flushed with anger, said, while trying to maintain his dignity, and not break down in a cry, “Mr. Dalrymple, there is only one boy in school who could, or would do this thing. If he will come out, openly, I will meet him. I hate a sneak.”

“John Fairfax, did you draw those caricatures upon the board?” asked Mr. Dalrymple at once.

“No, sir,” answered John promptly. The school was blank with astonishment.

“Who did?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

There were hisses all over the room at this answer, for they knew he was lying.

“Let me punch his head for him, Than,” whispered Calvert.

“No, Calvert—I’m not allowed to fight; but I’ll not stay here and be bullied any longer. I’ll—”

“What, Than?”

“Never mind—I know what I’ll do,” said Than, his lips set in determination.

“Does any one know anything of this matter?” asked Mr. Dalrymple.

No answer.

“If I had proof of what I suspect, my course would be plain,” said he, drawing his strap through his hand suggestively, as if he were longing to use it, “but I shall wait. Fairfax rub off the boards.”

An hour passed on, and dinner time came, but Than did not go home to dinner. He was not in school that afternoon, and when five o'clock came, and no Than, his mother became uneasy ! Six o'clock, and no Than ! She went down to the store to consult with her husband. She found him standing in the front door-way, looking up and down the street; and she had but to look in his face to see depicted there the same feeling of unrest she experienced in her own breast.

“ He ’ll be home directly ! He ’ll be home directly ! He feels bashful about coming in, since he went away in such a grand humor this morning,” said the father, knowing his wife’s thoughts as well as if she had spoken.

Calvert, coming in just then, told of Than’s threat, and her heart sank within her. She knew so much better than any one else, the nature of her proud, wayward boy ; and she knew she should not see his face that night—perhaps, never again.

Inquiries and search were fruitless. All that could be learned, was that Jakey Jones, a boy of Than’s age, from the same school, was missing,

too; and it was conjectured the two were together. His parents would not mortify Than by advertising him, and Mr. Sprague took care that the affair was kept out of the newspapers, altogether; or Than might have been captured and brought back the very first day, for his bald head was a good mark upon him. Calvert was a good friend then and never seemed so near to them as in this time of trouble; but how wearily the days dragged on!

The children stood about talking in whispers and were very unhappy. The father tried to keep a stout heart, and show a brave front, but when the name of his first born came to his lips at family prayer, he could say no more and bowed his head in his hands. Than! Than! was the burden of every heart in that voiceless prayer. The oft sung hymn died on their lips, for the voice of the loved one was not heard. Than! Than! His loss was felt in everything. Joy was gone out of the house.

The days wore away slowly, until three times the mother had cried at midnight over her boy's unpressed pillow. Was he going farther and farther away from the love and the prayers

that were calling him home, or had his feet turned back, and was he almost in his mother's arms again. Suspense was too hard, and his mother broke down.

There were lights in the house all night—watchers with the sick; and yet no sign of the wanderer.

Early on the fourth morning, Aunt Letty was striding to the back alley with her heaping ash-pan held carefully before her. She was crooning softly to herself in a broken voice “Where, oh where,” when a weak but well known voice asked “Aunt Letty, have you got anything to eat?”

“Laws-a-mercy, child!” she exclaimed,—let fall the ash-pan, rushed through the clouds of dust, and caught the boy to her bosom,—“To eat? Well I reck’n I have. Nobody aint eat nuffin since that disharmonious mornin’ when you took your departure. There’s plates and piles of victuals—come.” She hurried him back to the kitchen and thrust before him a plate of food—“Has you been a-starvin’ all this time, honey?”

Than for answer seized a slice of bread in

one hand, tore off a piece of meat with his teeth, and with his mouth full asked "Aunt Letty, what were the lights in the house all night for!"

"Laws sakes, chile, did you done reckin yo mother'd sleep tell you come? She's sick too!"

Than's hand dropped, and his mouth stood still.

"But where did you circumvent all night? How did you observate the lights?" continued Aunt Letty.

"I slept in our stable, but I didn't know mother was sick," and his lips trembled.

"She'll be all harmonious as soon as she lays eyes on you, honey. There, eat away, and run in."

But there was no time, for Dinah, peeping in at the kitchen window, having assured herself it was no ghost, had carried the glad news to the house; and here came brothers, sisters, father—yes, and mother too, in her gown, all overjoyed to see him. Not one word of reproach! And Than had been afraid to come home.

There was not a happier breakfast-table in all the city that morning. The mother insisted

that she was well, and presided at the head of her bountiful board with a grateful heart. She had imagined so much worse than this.

In the evening of the same day, Mrs. Sprague was sitting in her room, and through her open door could hear the children drawing Than's story from him for the twentieth time, by much, questioning.

"What made Jakey Jones go, too, Than?" asked Louis.

"Oh, he has been wanting to go, you know,—a long time. They do treat him real mean at home. Those big sisters just order him around like a dog, and he's been talking of running away—months. But he's a coward. He cried, because he was hungry, and he *would* come home. I wouldn't have come back if it hadn't been for him."

"Little sisters are not mean, are they, Than?" asked Daisy nestling close to him.

"No, Daisy."

"Where were you going, Than?" asked Calvert, impatient at the interruption.

"I told you!—to California."

"And you didn't have any money, and were

going to walk? How far did you get, and didn't you get anything to eat?" asked Cary greedily.

"We got past Boston—that's forty miles."

"Boston," interrupted David—"Boston, Massachusetts?"

"Of course not—our little Boston down here—there are Bostons everywhere. We didn't have anything but some cold biscuit and some matches."

"Matches! What could you do with matches?" asked Ashley.

"We ate all our biscuit up by dinner time the first day. Then we got so hungry,—I kept drawing my belt tighter and tighter, but I could not forget I was hungry. We went then at night into a cornfield, got some ears and roasted them. Oh how good! I don't believe there is anything in the world so good as roasted corn. We slept in an old spring house, but there wasn't any milk there, and next morning it was funny starting off without any breakfast, and you know how it rained and rained. At last we went into another cornfield, got some corn, gathered some sticks and struck a match—but our matches were soaked—I drew my belt tighter and went on. I

was awful hungry. Jakey hung behind and kept wondering how far we had come.

"Why didn't you go into some house and ask for something to eat?" asked David excitedly.

"Do you think I'd beg?" asked Than indignantly.

"Well, you stole corn?" said David stoutly.

"Go on, Than, what did you do?" said Cary quickly.

"Well, we went on, and at last Jakey began to cry—and declared he couldn't starve, and he would go and ask for something to eat. So he went into the next house and came out with his pockets full of corn bread and potatoes."

"Did you eat any, Than?" asked Ashley.

"Yes," acknowledged Than slowly.

"I'm so sorry, I wish you had starved it out," said Ashley heroically.

"Did you ever go without your breakfast and then without your dinner, young lady?" asked Than, as if there was nothing more to be said.

"Oh go on, Than," said Cary.

"Well some fellows came along in a wagon

and I was scared, they looked at us so hard ; and they talked with each other about us before they came up, and laughed, and then stopped us and asked, ' Which way are you going ? ' ' This way,' I said. They laughed at my answer, and drove off without capturing us as I was sure they meant to do."

" Well Than, what *did* make you come home ? "

A bright blush mantled his cheek, and his eyes shone as he answered—" mother."

His mother heard it, and oh how thankful she was for the bond between herself and her son !

CHAPTER XI.

THE HERO.

“ **T**HAN, you need not go to school,” said his mother the next morning, as that young gentleman, with a great deal of desperate resolution depicted in his face, was gathering his books.

“ I’d rather go and have it over, mother. I don’t want to sneak out of it. I’d rather face the boys at once,” said he, and went off.

He was received with much consideration, after all, for boys can respect feelings, and they in their hearts thought Than had done a brave thing—all to the coming back, and that they forgave, or laid to Jakey Jones.

But this escape from expected persecution only made what came after the harder to bear. All went on quietly for a few days until an opportunity offering itself, the boards were again covered with caricatures of Than; just the things to goad him to the quick, but he was

silent, and Mr. Dalrymple, unable to fasten the proof upon any one, was forced to pursue his former course.

These insults were followed by innumerable affronts, which kept Than's blood at boiling heat. But what could a boy in his case do? He went about home silent or boorish—weighed down by his trouble.

One night he sat moodily leaning his head upon his hands. "What is the matter, Than?" asked his father.

"I'm not going to let a boy hit me more than four times, without hitting him back," said he, shaking his head doggedly.

"If you let one of your size hit you once, without defending yourself, I'll punish you," answered his father unguardedly.

It was enough—Than's face brightened. The load was gone off his spirits.

"Than," said his mother gently, "I hope you will not fight."

"I don't want to fight, but then a fellow can't take every thing, you know."

Next day all was quiet—no annoyances; and Than was beginning to fear he should have no

casus belli, after all. School was dismissed, and he was going down the stairs leisurely, talking with David, when some one hurried down, and not being very careful, hit Than with his elbow as he passed him,—an evident affront. It was John.

Than left David, and suddenly starting down, passed John before the next landing, and not being very careful, brushed his coat sleeve in passing. This was enough. John had the longest legs and easily won the race to the bottom. He took his stand just outside the school gate, jerked off his coat, and called upon Than to come forth and be demolished, pointing the insult by crying out, “O, you Blue Pill !”

Than went, but expecting to have time to take off his jacket and get ready, was unprepared for the blow which sent him sprawling on the bricks. A half circle immediately formed about the combatants. John had pounced upon his fallen foe, and was about to pound him, when David, who came sauntering out of the school yard, saw it all. He deliberately changed his books from his right arm to his left, as he neared the gate, and in the most unconcerned

manner drew his fist to his shoulder, and striking out, laid John low. "Start fair," said he as he changed his books back again, and without once looking behind him, went on his way.

Than had time now to jump to his feet, jerk off his jacket, and stand ready to meet John. John came on but got such a glorious pommeling that he was glad to roar, "enough."

Mr. Dalrymple witnessed the whole affair from his window; and could not but feel the justice of it, and the boys wondered that "Old Dal" never found out about the fight.

Than was a hero. His friends all crowded around, and lauded him, until he felt big enough to whip single handed all the down-towners combined. And this was but the beginning of glory. He had had a taste of victory and was not satisfied. Every day witnessed new triumphs, until his mother could not take him to market with her, without turning to find her basket upset on a curbstone and Than off fighting some offender in the dust.

There was no end to the offences and insults that boy received: and he might have become a distinguished prize fighter only,—he met at

last with a sad reverse, was knocked into a gutter by a young rough, who had added to nature's weapons a pair of brass knucks. Than dragged himself home so bruised and bespattered that he could hardly see or be seen.

The world used him better after that. It was wonderful, how few boys made faces at him, or jostled him, or would not get out of his road, now. Even a "down-towner,"—hated tribe,—could sometimes pass him on the street without receiving a challenge to come and be annihilated.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOAT RACE.

“WHY, Ashley, you have not eaten your dinner. Are you sick?” asked Daisy, rummaging in the lunch basket, at the last recess, for another piece of pie.

“No,” said Ashley, “I’m almost starved though,—I save my dinner for Billy.”

“Billy who? I wish I had saved some of mine too,” said Daisy, visions of starving children rising before her, “Billy who? Ashley.”

“Billy Goat,” said Ashley, with a burst of merriment.

“Now, Ashley! I thought it was some poor little orphan boy, that hadn’t any father or mother.”

“No, no, Daisy—it’s a Billy with horns—great big horns. He just runs us! Sophia saves her lunch too; we coax him along by holding it out to him, and when he comes too near, we drop it and run. Oh it’s such fun!”

“ Oh,” said Daisy, “ I was just going to eat another piece of pie; but I believe I’ll save it, and have some fun, too.”

Billy had learned by this time to expect his afternoon meal; and to-day hardly waited for the children to come in sight of his stable, before he started after them with all his speed. They were walking leisurely along, not at all prepared for so early a reception, when Daisy spied the goat coming at them, with his head down, ready to have his dinner or his revenge. “ There he comes!—The goat! the goat!” she fairly screamed, and ran away as fast as she could.

Sophia had just time to seize a piece of bread, throw it to him, and make her escape. Ashley had caught up an immense piece of pie,—the first thing in her basket,—and stood ready to appease his wrath; but the monster devoured the bit of bread at a bite, and started towards her so suddenly that Ashley was startled into a little screech, and fled, forgetting to let fall the pie. Away she ran, faster, faster—goat is nearer—faster, faster—goat is gaining—faster, faster,—she turns to look, he is almost upon her! with another screech she darts on with out-

stretched arms, and comes bump against an elegant lady, just alighting from a splendid carriage. The pie splashes all over the rich costume. Ashley stops abashed, blushing, and stammers out her apologies. The goat dashes on, and is only kept from pursuing his pie by the interference of some passing gentlemen.

Two other ladies and an old gentleman hastened from the carriage and crowded about the unfortunate lady, with many expressions of sympathy for her, mingled with blame for poor Ashley, while the footman busied himself wiping off the stains.

“Some children are intolerably rude,” said one.

The child’s lip quivered, and she again stammered out her sorrow.

“Yes, yes, there, don’t cry,” said the pie-stained lady with the sweetest of smiles. She even took hold of Ashley’s arm and held her as she poured forth her kind assurances. “It was the merest accident. It is a little matter—see, I have forgotten it already, and am only sorry for you, now.”

Ashley’s face grew crimson, the veins in her

neck began to swell, and she struggled savagely to rid herself of the hand upon her arm, and cried out at last in agony, "Let me go, you hurt me."

"See her ill temper!" said one of the ladies. "Come, Eleanor, it is of no use. You are only too kind not to punish her severely."

"Well, child," said the sweet smiling one called Eleanor, still smiling—"try next time to be a little more careful, but you must not fret about this, it is nothing. Come, father, we will return home for repairs."

All this time Ashley had been struggling under these sweet words, in a most unaccountable way, and justified the opinion the strangers formed of her as being a very violent, unreasonable child. So soon as her arm was free, she clasped it with her hand and recoiled from her sweet consoler as if she had been bitten by a snake; and still, as if the snake had charmed her, she stood there gazing upon the ladies re-entering the carriage. The last, who followed the others, had been a silent spectator of the scene, and something in her look had shown her in sympathy with the child; and now she put out her hand in passing, and said, "Poor child," in a tone of true pity.

The action was unseen by the others, but Ashley treasured it up in her heart with the sweet face of her who did it.

As the child with swelling heart turned away, she passed a knot of clerks standing at the door of a large dry-goods house, and heard one of them say, "There goes a little spit-fire, anyhow!"

Daisy and Sophia, with laudable discretion, had reached home in safety and dared do no more than peep out of a second story window and feel anxious about Ashley.

"I wish Than were here, he would just go and kill that old goat," said Daisy.

"I 'spect she's all butted to pieces," said Sophia consolingly.

Ashley, poor child, came in sight of home at last, heart sore and wretched; but it was too much when she beheld those two little heads safe, bobbing at her out of the second story window.

"Let's go meet her," said Sophia when they were satisfied the goat was not coming too, and they scampered down as brave as could be.

"O, Ashley, did the goat butt you? I'm so sorry," they both exclaimed.

"Yes, very sorry you are, when you ran off and left me all alone," said Ashley, glad to find some vent for her indignation.

Just then Than came up, whistling, with his satchel over his shoulder, and cut *The Last Rose of Summer* right in two to exclaim "Hallo, Ashley, what *is* the matter? You look as if somebody had beat you at leap frog, or called you ugly, or something dreadful."

"Oh Than, I want to show you something. Just look here," said she, rolling up her sleeve. There was an ugly red welt around the arm just above the elbow, as if it had been tightly tied with a rope.

"What is it? What did it, Ashley?"

"Look under, Than, I can't see there, but it hurts so much."

"Why Ashley—it's cut, it's bleeding. How did you do it?"

"I didn't know a goat, could butt that way, did you, Daisy?" said Sophy.

"Goat!" said Ashley indignantly, "I'll tell Than," and she told her story, ending with—"you would think she was an angel to see her,

but oh, she did squeeze. She had on a diamond ring. That's what she did it with."

"I don't see how she could," said Than, "but come along, mother will fix it. She'd better just let me see her smile, the wretch," he added, shaking his head threateningly, not meaning his mother by any means.

Mrs. Sprague bathed and dressed the poor arm amid the indignation of the whole family; but surprised them all with another view of the case, when she wondered who the unfortunate lady was and regretted the loss of the silk—they had not thought of that; and still more to Ashley's sorrow, she forbade any playing with goats in future.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMPOSITIONS.

“ **I** DON’T see what I have ever done to make anybody think I could write a composition!” said Ashley, despairingly, as she threw down her books upon the study table where all the children were gathered, a few evenings later.

“ Just my fix, Ashley!” said Daisy. “ I’ve got to write my first composition, too, and I’m but just seven and you are nine. I don’t know what to take—What will you write about Ashley?” asked Daisy.

“ Cats—I have to.”

“ Well, Daisy, you write about cats, too, and I will see which does the best,” said their mother, encouragingly.

“ Just the thing, mother, for I have lots of them,” said Daisy.

“ I don’t know anything about cats except Tiny. I have never had a cat since,” said Ashley, still despondent.

"Very well, daughter, write about Tiny. Call your composition, 'My Old Cat,' and tell all about Tiny."

"I believe I can do that," said Ashley brightening, and she and Daisy were soon busily writing.

David, too, felt inspired by the sight of so much ink and paper, and thought he would write that letter to his grandfather, whose namesake he was,—a duty to which he had often been urged by his mother. Now, David felt quite sure of himself. He knew he could write. Compositions were nothing to him. He had a contempt for them, they were so easy. He had written all about dogs, and cats, and a great many other animals, that all had heads, and eyes, and tails, with perhaps some other remarkable characteristics.

True, letter writing was a new field for him, but then he had some very original ideas upon the subject, and hence it was, he could set about writing to his grandfather with so much confidence.

He was not long about his self-imposed task, and had his letter neatly copied and addressed,

before the others had nearly exhausted their ideas upon their subjects. At last Daisy laid down her pen, and read over her work to satisfy herself; and then Ashley with a great sigh announced her task also done.

David was first called upon to read to his mother what he had written to her honored father, and he began.

“Dear Grandpa,

*An honest man is the noblest work of God.
Always be honest and pay your debts, and you will
be happy,*

Your Affectionate

Grandson and namesake,

David.”

The peals of laughter which this brought forth from the children, and the smile upon his mother's face greatly disconcerted David.

“I'd like to know what you're all laughing at,” said he, fiercely turning round upon them.

“Oh, Dave!” roared Than, hardly able to speak. “This is almost as good as your first,—‘Tongs,—Tongs have two legs. If they had only one they would be a poker,” and the laugh

was renewed at David's expense, for a joke was never suffered to die in that house.

"Mother," said he in despair, "I don't see anything funny in it. It is the very nicest copy in my book, and I took pains to learn to write it, on purpose. I'd like to see Than beat that writing!"

"It is written beautifully, my son; but it is not just the kind of letter to send your grandfather. Never mind, David, you will do better next time," said the mother, drawing him to her and stroking his hair. But David was not to be appeased in any such way, and fell to kicking the table leg with his boot, while he wriggled in his mother's embrace.

"Come, Daisy, let us see what you have written," said the mother presently.

Daisy read—"Cats."—"I have got three cats and four pigeons. One cat used to be Cary's but it isn't now. My black and yellow cat isn't as little as the little one and isn't as big as the big one and when it talks it says meou it has got four feet and a tail and a soar eye now I am going to tell another verse about another

cat this is my big cat he is so fat you wouldn't think when he lies down he could get up again if you hadn't seen him lie down and get up again before he also has a tail."

This was greeted with a round of applause ; as, indeed, it should have been, for it is not easy to find so much natural history put into so short a space.

Ashley was next called upon, and with great diffidence began :

" My old cat.—She had four legs and two eyes and two ears and one mouth and one tail behind. She had four kitens and one of them is white and one is black and the other two is dead and she was sick for a few days and I forgot to tell you what kind of cat she was black and white the fattest cat I ever saw and the largest I ever saw and the prettiest. She did not like for children to tuch her kitens, she loved her kitens as well as A Mother loves her children the white and black kiten was a year old before they died and the old cat was left a widow. I forgot to tell you my old cat's name her name was Tiny

Lightfoot at length she was taken sick with the rolling kick and died in a fit. All the human power of man was put forth to save her But all in vain she has gone to another world and we are left to mourn her untimely end.”

“ Boo-hoo ! Let’s cry !” said Than.

“ There, Than, do not make fun of Ashley. All my little ones have done well to-night, and I am proud of them,” said the mother.

“ But, Ashley,” said Than, “ are you sure that cat’s tail was behind ? You ought to be sure of such a thing, before you say it. Oh that poor widow ! Let’s see, Ashley. Let’s see about your spelling. Mother, I don’t believe she is learning a thing. Here’s ‘tuch,’ and ‘kitens,’—poor widow, lost her kitens !—and capitals are sprinkled about everywhere ; here is ‘ a Mother’ *mother* with a capital.”

“ Well, Than, you told me, yourself, always to put a big ‘ I,’ when I meant myself, because I must think myself important ; and I am sure mother is a great deal more importanter than I am. If any word deserves a capital, it is mother.”

“ Hurrah for Ashley !” said Cary.

"No, you must not hurrah for Ashley either, when she is wrong. Ashley, now listen. When you speak *to* mother, and call her that as a name, you must put a capital; but when you just talk about *a* mother you put a little letter. Do you see?"

"Oh, yes, sir professor. When I speak *to* mother I am to be polite, but when I talk about her behind her back I am to be impudent. Is that it?"

"This turned the laugh on Than, but he would not be beaten in that way, and made Ashley listen until she understood.

Notwithstanding this quizzing, Ashley felt greatly encouraged, and even began of her own accord to write to some little country friends, who answered in a style as peculiar and graceful as her own.

At first, she was much puzzled about where to put the date; but David kindly showed her, and even offered to help her with the rest of the letter.

"No, Davy, my little friends are not like poor grandpa, they are all honest,—I—"

"Now, Ashley, please don't. I am in such

trouble about that, and if you won't tell, I'll tell you something."

"Indeed, indeed, I won't."

Then David with burning cheeks and trembling lips whispered in her ear.

"Why! Da! vid! Sprague! You didn't send that letter. Surely you will never hear the last of it!" cried Ashley clasping her hands in distress, "O I am so sorry. What made you do it!—But never mind, I'll help you with all my might when the time comes."

David gave her a hurried, shy kiss and ran off. Ashley looked after him with a perplexed face, and said to herself,—"I will help him! Oh, me!" and continued her letter.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SECRET.

THE next morning, Ashley awoke with a headache, which proved to be the beginning of an attack of illness ; and as is usual with such constitutions, when they do fail, her illness was extreme,—so that all despaired of her life ; and though she rallied, it was long before her strength returned.

Dr. Barr, wise man, thought too much study had injured her,—Ashley was never too sick to laugh at this idea under the bed clothes,—she must be kept from school and interested in play, he said. Her parents, of course, were of the same opinion, and used all the pleasant means they could think of to induce their child's over-tasked brain to rest, and coax their darling back to health.

Dr. Barr, as the originator of the fiction about overwork, felt it a duty to give Ashley an

airing, once in a while ; and Dr. Alden, though he shared Ashley's doubts as to hard study's being the cause of her illness, put his buggy at her service, calling for her as he went on his rounds of visiting, and especially when his calls took him far out on the country roads ; or his leisure gave him time to seek the fresh air at will.

They were driving one day on a beautiful road, chatting about the trees, and fields, and houses, when they stopped before a magnificent house, almost shut off from view by a winding avenue of noble lindens. Everything about the place bespoke wealth. The fences, the walks, the buildings, all were planned with a care betokening taste unshackled by motives of economy.

“ Who lives here, doctor ? ” asked Ashley as the gate swung open at their approach, and they passed in among the winding lindens.

“ One of my fair patients.”

“ Is she sick ? ”

“ Not very.”

“ What's the matter with her, doctor ? ” asked Ashley in sympathizing tone.

“ Heart disease, I believe,” answered he with a twinkle in his bright eyes.

“ How dreadful! Does she know it?”

“ Yes. I think she does.”

“ Oh! Did you tell her, doctor?”

“ No she told me first, but I had detected the symptoms. Here we are—come,” he said as he drew up near the house, and sprang from the buggy.

“ I am not to get out?” asked Ashley, surprised.

“ Yes, I promised my patient to bring you. Come,” he said in his earnest way that no one ever thought of disputing.

How rich everything was! What elegance! What style in the very manner of the waiter, as he took the doctor’s card. Ashley enjoyed it. She was not overwhelmed because unused to splendor, but stepped into the luxurious rooms as if she had been used all her life to gilding and tapestry. The doctor liked her way of taking it, and was proud of his “little boy” as he took her hand to present her to the queen that entered. A queen, indeed, she might be, who in superb toilette and with majestic step, swept

forward, and graciously extending her hand to the little girl, bowed to the gentleman, and sank into a chair with elegant ease. Now Ashley was overwhelmed. "Miss Ingraham, this is my little boy, Ashley, who came out into the dark road to meet me on my first entrance into your city."

"Yes," said the lady smiling as she touched a bell; "Have you become reconciled yet to being a girl, Miss Ashley?"

The doctor had been proud of his little pet when she first came into the splendid rooms, whose like he knew she had never seen before; but now, when he wanted her to appear at her best, he was ashamed of her. He had never seen her behave so badly. She blushed and fidgeted and stammered, "Not exactly—ma'am—that is contented—I—but—" she could not say another word. Just at this moment a young lady appeared in the doorway in answer to the bell—"Lena," said Miss Ingraham, "Will you take this little girl to see the swans?"

"She will feel better when she becomes acquainted," she said, as the child and Miss Lena left the room. "She is a beautiful child."

"I am glad you like her—I do not know what makes her so shy. It is not her nature."

"Very becoming, at any rate," said the lady, and then they fell to talking about—Europe perhaps; they were both in love with it.

Ashley was not out of the door, before she slipped her hand into Miss Lena's with the confidence of a friend. Miss Lena was pleased to have the child's love, for her life was almost barren of affection.

Ashley was silent at first, as if still in awe of something she was leaving behind; but soon went skipping along, looking up into the kind face of her companion, and giving her hand a squeeze now and then in token of her love. At last, she asked almost in a whisper, and looking over her shoulder as if afraid,

"Is she very sick, do you think?"

"Who?" asked Miss Lena surprised.

"Miss Ingraham."

"No; why?"

"If she is, I hope she'll repent before she dies; but I don't believe she has yet. She knew me."

"Repent? Of what?" asked Miss Lena, amazed.

“ Oh, you know ! I’ve loved you ever since. Don’t you know me ? ”

“ Know you ? No, I never saw you before.”

“ You have forgotten, then,—because it was you and she. She was bad, and you were good. Don’t you know the goat and the pie, and how you said “ Poor child ? ”

“ I was poor child, too ! I tell you it did hurt. Just look here ! ” said Ashley, rolling up her sleeve, quickly—“ Ah it’s gone now.”

“ And are you that horrid romp, that raced through the streets, and daubed pie all over her ? ” exclaimed Miss Lena, pretending to be horrified.

“ Now, you know you don’t think it,” said Ashley with a deprecating gesture.

“ Oh, I thought you said you were.”

“ I did *do* that, but you don’t think me so *very* bad, do you ? ”

“ You look thinner, now,—and paler. Have you been sick ? ”

“ Yes, that is the reason Dr. Alden takes me riding. They say I studied too hard, but I didn’t : I just played all the time. I told Dr. Alden so, and he laughed and said if I had been

playing so much, I must work now and go with him to see his patients."

"Do you love Dr. Alden?" asked Miss Lena suddenly.

"I think I do! Isn't he handsome?"

"Perfectly.—Have you known him long?"

"All"—she clapped her hands to her mouth. "I was just going to say all my life, and that would have been a story; but I've known him ever so long, ever since I was a little girl, and I love him *so* much."

"Then don't let him come here," said Miss Lena quickly as if the words came out without her will.

"Why, Miss Lena?" asked Ashley looking up wonderingly; but they now approached the lake, and Miss Lena called her attention to the swans, and delighted her beyond measure by loosing a little boat tied under some willows, and rowing her about the water.

Ashley forgot everything but her present happiness; and it was like being called from fairy land, when the doctor beckoned to them from the shore. When the boat touched the bank, she bounded out and cried, "I have had a

splendid time ; thank you, Miss Lena ! ” and then she looked uneasily around, but seeing that Miss Ingraham was not there, was happy again.

“ I, too, must thank you, Miss Powell, for these roses,” said Dr. Alden, touching Ashley’s cheek, “ You have done her more good, than all my medicine.”

“ I have enjoyed it heartily. I wish she could come every day,” said Miss Powell.

“ She shall come, whenever I do ; but come, pet, it is time to go. Miss Ingraham begs you to excuse her as she is not well, and hopes you will come whenever you wish, and enjoy yourself as you please. And I think, judging from this day’s progress, we may consider you cured. Good afternoon, Miss Powell. Come, Ashley.”

“ Well ? ” asked the doctor when they had passed again the winding lindens, and were driving homeward ; for Ashley was quite silent, although it was plain her little head was busy with deep thoughts.

“ Oh, doctor, she’s the one ! she’s the one ! She cut my arm with her diamond ring. She had it on to-day.”

“ What nonsense, child ! A great many ladies

have diamond rings, besides, Ashley, I have always had my doubts about that matter. I don't believe it is possible to do that with a ring."

"It was her nails then," persisted Ashley.

The doctor smiled in spite of himself, but he said: "Ashley, you must stop this nonsense. You are mistaken in Miss Ingraham. You cannot love me or you would not talk so." A secret and undefinable, but unwelcome, distrust of the lady which had sometimes obtruded itself into his heart, made these doubts of Ashley's doubly annoying.

"Doctor, you know I love you; but it *was* Miss Ingraham, for Miss Powell was with her that day; and she knew me to-day, and I knew her."

"How do you know?"

"Because she said, 'Is it possible you are that little romp that raced through the streets and splashed pie all over Miss Ingraham's dress?'"

"Ashley!" he exclaimed, as if he wished she could unsay those words.

"And then she said," continued Ashley,

hesitatingly, "I don't know whether I ought to tell you, it sounds like a secret but she did not say so.

"What is it?" he demanded in a tone not to be disobeyed.

"She asked me if I loved you and I told her how much, and she said, 'Then don't let him come here.'"

The doctor said nothing, and Ashley was too miserable to care to say more. When they reached her home, and he took her in his arms to lift her out, she looked into his face to see if he was angry; but he stepped into his buggy, and drove off without a word.

CHAPTER XV.

PAYING DEBTS.

A SHLEY was so much excited and pained by her visit to the lindens that she altogether forgot David's little secret which he had intrusted to her so lovingly.

One day she and Louis were seated on the front hall steps trying to amuse themselves.

“My tongue is longer than yours,” said Louis as if giving a challenge.

“Because you use it so much,” said Ashley.

“Now you knew I'd say that about you if you didn't get ahead of me, but I don't care—I can stick mine out farther, anyhow,” said Louis, shutting one eye and twisting the other around so as to get a good view of his tongue.

“I can touch my chin,” said Ashley poking out her tongue as if suddenly aroused to the importance of the new accomplishment.

"That's because you have to stick it out so much at the doctor," retorted Louis.

Just then the door bell rang.

"There's a letter!" cried the children. Both scampered to see who could get it. Both seized it, and the letter was likely to be torn in two, until Ashley let go her hold to clasp her hands and cry, "Oh! oh! It's from him! It's from him!"

"To be sure it is!" said Louis, "I knew that the minute I saw it didn't have an envelope on it, and was folded so crooked, and sealed with a wafer. But what of that? I hope it's another hundred dollars for mother's new chairs. You know the last went for taxes—But I don't see the use of crying over such fat letters as these always are."

"Oh, Louis, it's dreadful!"

"Well, I suppose we had better take mother's letter to her, instead of standing here guessing about it all day," said Louis.

"I wish I could chew it up, and spit it out, I would do it in a minute," said Ashley slowly following Louis, who bounded up stairs three steps at a jump, and ran into his mother's room

crying, "Here's the letter for you, mother! New chairs! new spoons! new everything! Make a wish, mother. Here's your good fairy!"

Mrs. Sprague opened the clumsy looking epistle as tenderly, as if it had been the daintiest letter in the world, and read,

"MR. N. SPRAGUE, ESQIRE,

*Deer sun and Dawter,—I alwaz nu yu had a
hopful family but late developments is remarkable
I desir to no them pursunaly espeshaly the wun
cald David after me as thare is wun det I hav
ode a long time and I am going to pa it and
that is a vizit I am going to see yu in April
frum yore affekshunate father yore*

obedient servant

DAVID ASHLEY.

Mrs. Sprague knew her father's style too well to allow the children to see the letter, for she loved him dearly, and had always instilled into them a reverence for their grandfather; but this letter was certainly "remarkable" in more respects than one; and she felt that one of the

children, at least, could give an explanation. "Louis, dear, will you tell David to come to me?" she said.

The next moment, and Ashley had come forward, and begun to intercede for the culprit.

"Mother, please don't scold him. He was so hurt about our laughing at him, and he thought it was so nice, and that grandpa could appreciate it if we did not."

"And the poor child really sent that letter?"

"There now I've told on him!" exclaimed Ashley.

"No matter, I was going to ask him, and David would not tell a story."

"No, indeed he wouldn't!—Here comes Davy now."

"David, my son," said his mother as the young gentleman walked in looking very sheepish, for he guessed what was the matter. "I have here an answer to your letter to your grandfather. I hope next time you will trust the judgment of your mother. Any one but your grandfather, would have been angry, but he takes it pleasantly and is coming to see us in April."

“ Is he ? ” gasped David, despairingly.

“ I don’t want to hurt your feelings about it, Davy, but it was an almost unpardonable thing to do,—to give such advice to an old man. You tell him not to steal, and to pay his debts, as if he were a thief. If he had been any other than the most upright of men, it would be shocking, it would seem like a reproach, but I want you to remember your grandfather is one of the best men in the world. As you will soon know him now, (David winced) I will tell you more about him. He is a peculiar man,—very odd—and you will not always know what to think of him ; but he has a noble heart and would never owe any man a cent.”

David could not have expressed any sorrow then to save his life, for his shyness never let him have more than one confidant at a time ; but the first time he was alone with his mother, he startled her by going up suddenly behind her, and catching her head in his arms as he whispered, “ I am sorry I sent that letter,” kissed the top of her ear and ran off out of sight.

CHAPTER XVI.

REMINISCENCES.

THE little iron porch above the front door, which the children called the old woman's nose, was a favorite resort for the young people. There, they told stories in the evening, and talked over old times as children will do as soon as they begin to prattle. They watched the brilliant hotel, the throngs of people going in and out, and the carriages rumbling to and fro over the ever busy street; and now, when they were looking for their grandfather, there was always some little one on the watch—there being a kind of rivalry as to who should see him first.

They were gathered here late one afternoon, engaged in their favorite pastimes. Cary began, “Don't you remember, Than?”

“Oh, yes!” said Than impatiently, for he was reading and did not want to be disturbed with childish prattle. He had taken to a razor lately and was getting to be particular about

the number on his boots, and the fashion of his neck-ties.

“Don’t you remember?” continued Cary—for the children, who had heard the story ever since they could remember anything were eager for it, and would have told it themselves if Cary had not gone on,—“when we first found out about Santa Claus?—how we lay awake, right still, and pretended to be asleep, until we heard something going on in the parlor, and we crept down, and burst open the parlor door—and there, sure enough, were mother and father with all the good things? Mother didn’t seem to think it was a nice joke, and we went back to bed in a hurry. I suppose we shall never know what became of that big drum, that I am sure I saw hanging over my stocking! I’ve never tried to find out big folks’ secrets since. They don’t like it.”

Ashley thought of a big folks’ secret that she knew, and sighed.

“Indeed, they don’t!” said Louis. “They don’t think about things anyhow as we do. Don’t you remember how provoked mother was when I took off my new shoes and left them by the

pump, because it was not the fashion to wear shoes at that school? I expected to find them, of course, when school was out but I didn't, and I had to go home barefooted."

"Served you right and you were out of the fashion after all, for you had to go barefooted where it wasn't the fashion, to pay for it. You did some queer things in your young days," said Than, hastily resuming his book, lest he should be drawn into the talk in spite of himself.

"And wasn't it funny," said David, "that time I took Ashley's medicine for her? It was pills and wasn't I sick! But mother says the best of it all was, I got sick on the pills, and Ashley got well without them."

"Don't you remember," said Daisy, "when I was five"—

"Why Daisy, it's not so very long ago but we might," said Cary.

Daisy had no chance to finish her story, for they all laughed, and then some one said something about grandpa.

"Wonder how he looks, any how!" said Than, closing his Virgil with a slam, for it was too dark to read any more.

"Mother says you are his very image, so he must be a beauty," said Ashley, from her perch on the railing.

"Well I'm not proud if I am pretty," answered Than complacently—"Get down, Ashley, you will fall," he added in his most authoritative tone.

"Oh, Than, I want to tell you what I did today. You know I went to see Sophia Farny? Well, we are going to the public school," said Ashley, stretching down her toes ready to jump.

"You are going to do no such thing, Miss. No sister of mine shall ever go to the public school."

"Why, Than?—You go."

"What of that? It don't hurt boys. It makes no difference where boys go. What put such a crazy notion into your head? That silly Sophy—I know."

"No, she didn't. The city school girls were going by, and Sophia bowed to one of them. I was astonished at her, but she said she used to go to the public school, when she was a little, teensy, weensy thing, because it was near; and that girl

went too. She is such a beautiful girl, Than—such big blue eyes, and she looks so smart. You'd like her the minute you saw her."

"Would I?" asked Than, and a conscious blush stole over his face.

"Well it's no place for you,—all kinds of girls! Teachers whip too!" said he; smacking his lips to emphasize it.

"Ah, Than! now you know they don't whip girls."

"Whew!" whistled Cary. "Indeed they do, I've heard the licks often."

"Well," said Ashley, "Mrs. Winchum shakes them, and that is just as awful. Sophy says the teachers don't know much; but then we don't care about learning. We are just going to make the girls stare,—get at the head of the school in a week or two, and then quit. Won't it be fun!"

"What a noble object! Well! Well! Ashley! You'll find something more than fun, too, getting ahead of Mary Russell, I think."

"Mary Russell? Who is she?" asked Ashley quickly.

"Oh—a girl," said Than with the same con-

scious blush, and then added quickly—"I am ashamed of you."

"Now, Than!" she exclaimed, pouting; "Well, we have already gone, anyhow. Sophy's grandma went with us this afternoon."

"So you are entered at the public school! And pray, what does mother say to it?"

"I haven't told her yet."

"Precocious young lady! You ought to have a diploma this very night. You'll surprise your grandmother!"

"Won't it be nice to have a grandma?" asked Cary cheerily.

"Per-haps," said Than, slowly, "but I rather think you'll all have to stand around when she comes."

"I should think so—mother says she's the particularest old lady that ever was," said Daisy.

"Shan't you, too, Than—have to stand around?" asked Cary, who was standing behind Than with his arms around his neck. Cary was always loving somebody.

"I? Humph!" said Than indignantly. The tone was enough. It needed nothing more to

convince everybody that he was not afraid of anybody.

“I don’t care for *her*. Boys can keep out of her way, but I wish *he* wasn’t coming,” sighed David with a look they could all understand.

“Why David Sprague! Ain’t you ashamed! I am glad they are coming. I like old people,” said Louis.

“Of course you do, Tow Head. You are a little old man, yourself,” said Than.

“You know grandma is not mother’s own mother—she’s just grandpa’s step-wife,” broke in Ashley with an important air.

“Step-wife!”

“Yes, she isn’t our own sure-enough grandma. Mother told me her own mother died when she was five years old, and grandpa got her another ma; and Mrs. Chittenden says I ought to be very good for such a good mother, for my mother’s stepmother was just as cross!—and made her sew like everything.”

“I wonder what makes old people so cross always!” exclaimed David.

“I’ll tell you, Davy, it’s the wrinkles!” said Daisy with a confidential air. “How can any-

body look sweet when they are all screwed up so?" and Daisy tried her best to pull her plump little face into wrinkles, but only succeeded in squeezing her eyes shut under her fat cheeks, and making everybody laugh.

"I don't see how he can look like Than, and be old," said Louis—"Oh, let's guess how he looks!"

"Well, well!" They all agreed—"You first Than—Ah, Than, please. Won't you?" cried the young ones pleadingly—"just draw your own picture when you get to be an old man."

"Well, then," Than began, "I think he is a fine looking, dignified old gentleman, with long, white beard, and keen black eyes—fine face—handsome nose—like mine you know. Doesn't wear specs,—dresses in broadcloth,—splendid gold watch, gold headed cane, but doesn't lean upon it. Gives a fellow a dollar, now and then. Go on, Dave."

"You'll be a jolly grandfather. Live to be old, Than. I shall be proud of you," said David with a patronizing air. "I think he is a little dried up old man, wrinkled like a hickory nut,—bald-headed,—a regular old blue-beard, eyes that

scare you to death. He carries a cane to flog with, and he pays his debts, but he never gives a boy a quarter. Drive ahead, Cary."

"I think he is more like Than's picture—only not so handsome. He stoops when he walks, and he shakes, and needs his cane. He looks cross because he has had trouble; but he will be proud of his four grandsons, and we will all try to please him. Now Louis."

"I think he's a great, big, jolly, old fellow—great big pockets like Santa Claus',—you know, Daisy. Has a big stick but I shall not be afraid of him. Now, Miss Ashley."

"I think he's a little—Who is that? There they are now! I'll be first!" and away she ran followed by them all; and there, sure enough, drawn up at the curb, was a carriage loaded with luggage, and a grizzly old gentleman of vast stature, standing before its open door ready to help somebody out. In a moment the children were all about him hugging his legs, pulling his coat-tails, tugging at his elbows, and crying, "Here we are grandpa!" "How do you do, grandma?" "How do you do, grandpa?" while the older ones stood near waiting to be noticed.

"Why childern, where on airth did you all come from? Last time I seen Molly she wa n't much taller than that there boy, and—now—look at 'em!" said a querulous voice from the carriage.

"Come don't be all day," growled the grandfather.

"I've got to get my things to rights," answered the same voice from the carriage. "There now, I'm ready!—If you'll just hold on to this here ridicule, I can better help myself, and keep my skeerts from off the wheel. There's one thing plentiful here besides children, and that's dirt. Look after that trunk there!"

She got out, a tall, spare person, with a sharp face, a snow-white cap, and from tip to toe the neatest, primmest, starchiest body in the world. If there is any truth in the usual idea of old maids, she got her husband by mistake. She kissed the children all around, carefully wiping her lips after each ordeal, with a fresh spot on her snowy handkerchief, and made her way to Mrs. Sprague, who stood within the doorway to welcome her.

Forgotten were all the hardships of her child-

hood, forgotten the coldness which had repressed her young affections, forgotten the jealousy with which her youthful pleasures were guarded ; and in the meeting with her step-mother after so long a separation, something of an almost filial affection stirred the heart of Mrs. Sprague.

The boys busied themselves with helping the driver in with two great trunks and a smaller one, upon which grandma kept her eye,—and of which more hereafter.

Mr. Ashley followed close, loaded with luggage, and did not seem inconvenienced by Daisy's hugging his leg and having a ride, as he strode on. He bent his face to his daughter to be kissed. It was a passive movement, in which he took no part ; and it seemed a poor return for the wealth of devotion in his daughter's greeting.

“Where's John ?” asked he, setting down a box within the door, and shaking off the children from his legs.

“He is not in now, father, but he will be in soon to supper. Here, Than, take this to your grandfather's room,” said Mrs. Sprague, relieving her father of one of his bags. “Here David, this.”

David came forward and grasped the bundle at arm's length.

"That's the boy is it?" roared his grandfather, chucking him under the chin, and holding his face up to view.—"Ahem!"

"The boy" got out of the way as quick as he could, and thereafter peeped at his grandsire from behind doors, and curtains, and other secure hiding places.

They made their way up stairs in single file into the parlor, amid the scoldings and complainings of the old lady, and the explosions of the old gentleman; for he was a very giant in stature, and had a voice like a lion. He walked leaning rather forward, with a short, quick step, as if he should fall over, if he did not catch himself; which gave him the appearance of always trying to overtake somebody. What with this, and his thick boots, and heavy stick, which came down at every step with a terrible thud, he made altogether a monstrous noise.

"Private earthquake!" whispered Than. "Have this chair, grandma," said Ashley, wishing to do something in spite of her discomfort.

"Not that, child, not that! Thank fortune

I'm not young and feeble. I'll leave rocking chairs for lazy bones. I'll sit here." And she crooked her joints with a spring, and sat bolt upright on the straightest chair in the house.

"Yes, you may take the bunnit," continued she. "Be careful. Don't muss it, and here, let me have that ridicule one minute." The next moment she had whipped out her hemstitching, and was working away, as if the great object in life were to pull threads, and tie holes in linen.

"Have a seat, father," said Mrs. Sprague, drawing towards him an easy chair, the largest in the room, but it did look diminutive in comparison with the man.

"Let me see if I will," said he slowly, as he took out his purse and held it up to the light. "No, I don't think I can afford it. I never sit down on a fancy chair like that, unless I've got the money to pay for it. If your sofa's as strong as it's big, I think it will bear; if not, I hope your carpet's soft."

"Now father," exclaimed grandma, "what ever possessed you to give that lunch basket to them childern? They'll have everything in a mess. Why, Daisy, hold your apron to ketch

the crumbs. Set down, you! which is it? Sammy! Jimmy! Johnny! you, you're spillin' that cake! just see the boy! I always did say, and I say yet, that one girl is worth more than twenty thousand boys,—they're so neat about a house, they are nice things to have. Oh that dreadful misery in my side?"

"Are you not well, ma?" asked Mrs. Sprague.

"Well?" repeated grandma, as if the very question were an insult to her anatomy. "I haven't seen a well minute since the goodness knows when. There now, Ashley, get the hath broom and sweep up the hath. I like to see things neat. There's nothing like what a purty behaved child is. O, that aching under my shoulder blade will drive me raving distracted!"

"If you are rested now," said Mrs. Sprague, "your room is ready. We have supper in a half hour,—Ashley, show your grandma to her room. Wouldn't you like to go, father?"

"Yes, I reckon I'll go and get some of the dust off," said grandpa, rising and taking his cane, "Why there's John!"

"How do you do, father?" said Mr. Sprague, entering in his brisk way, "I am glad to see

you. And here is mother, looking younger than ever. Tell me your receipt, mother. It would make my fortune as a patent medicine."

"Nothing, John, nothing in the world but cheerful sperits and not worryin',--there's noth-
ing like that for cheatin' old age," said grandma,
as she rolled up her hemstitching, and followed
Ashley out of the room.

At supper grandpa asked "What are you
doing with all the children, Molly? What do
they know, and how much do they earn?"

"They are all at school, father, you know—
all but Ashley. She has been very sick, and is
not well enough to study yet."

"Why, she looks well and hearty," spoke up
grandma, "I hope you have her industrious—
there's nothing like it for childern."

"I started to school to-day, mother," said
Ashley.

"Yes, and got there too," said Than.
"Mother, don't let her go. She has been to
the public school with Sophy."

"The public school!" exclaimed the mother.

"Let her go. What's the difference; let her
go if she wants to!" roared grandpa. "I dare say

she wastes her time anywhere. You always did have too proud notions, Molly."

"Just as good as any I reckon, and don't cost nothin'," put in grandma, "and the money you'd pay for schoolin' would buy yards and yards of linen. She's plenty old to learn hem-stitchin' and there's nothing like it for childern."

"But the public school!" objected the mother.

"What of it?" asked grandpa. "The finest flowers have to have the richest dirt to make them grow. Children are like plants, they need sunshine and to be let alone; nothing does a child so much good as to have its own way."

"Its own way," echoed grandma—"a child should never have its own way. So sure as a child wants a thing, that's the very thing it oughtn't to have. As the twig is bent so the tree is inclined."

"Which means," said grandpa, "that the twig is bent pretty much as it's going to be anyhow. Nancy here would plant a tree, and then for fear she had made some mistake, dig it up by the roots, and plant it over again and again, and then run to it every few minutes and give it a jerk

saying "Don't grow that way.—Stand so. How awkward you are! Why don't you do like other trees?"

"I don't know nothin' about trees and don't care nuther; but I do know childern need looking after and that pretty spry too, or there'll be some mighty knotty specimens."

"Knotty? Of course," said grandpa, "you wouldn't want all saplings to look alike, would you. Some come into the world with smooth bark and some with rough, some are straight and others are gnarled and dwarfish, and some have so precious little sap in them" (with a sly look at grandma), "that you wonder how they ever grew at all. You might as well expect to gather cherries from your pear and peach and plum trees as expect every girl to take to hemstitching."

"No, they don't take to what's good for them, of course. They have to be forced while they are young."

"This forcing business I've no liking for either," pursued grandpa. "I always feel mean when I eat a tomato from a hot house. How much blessed growing life it has been cheated out of. And a child made a woman before her

time!—it's horrible. What do you like Ashley?" asked grandpa, turning abruptly to the child, who had been watching him intently.

"When grandpa? Now?"

"All the time.—What do you like to do?"

"Ask Than," said Ashley blushing.

"Well, Nathanael. What is this sister of yours? Is she a full-grown belle at ten, or have they saved me a specimen of nature?"

"She *will* whistle, grandpa," answered Than laughing, "and she had a race with a goat not long ago. She is almost a tom-boy."

"I am astonished," said grandpa gravely. "Molly what do you mean by bringing up such a girl?" but as his eyes had been growing merrier and merrier all the time Ashley did not know what to think of him.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. PHILLIPS.

THE next morning, Dr. Alden called to pay his respects to the grandfather, and when the question of school was again mentioned, he added his entreaties to Ashley's, and the result was that, to Than's great disgust, Ashley and Sophy were allowed to enter the new school. Possibly had they realized the step they were taking, they would have preferred to graduate early, as they might easily have done at the Great Winchum Female Seminary, with honors and all the accomplishments, rather than to plod on here, as they did for many years, through dull rudiments.

However, it was worth something to feel as grand as those young ladies from the Seminary did that morning. It is so comfortable—the consciousness of being a little better, smarter, or richer than one's neighbors; but when one can feel in the heart a sense of superiority in all re-

spects to everybody about, as our young ladies did,—how delightful must the sensation be !

Mrs. Phillips gave them seats at rude desks, which bore the marks of many generations of jack-knives, and ink spots. It was a sad change from the oiled walnut and velvet of the seminary, and as the strangers had no lessons that day, they had plenty of time to draw comparisons—all in favor of themselves and the seminary. The first class was called, of girls about their own age. Then the contrast was indeed striking. The prompt, intelligent answers were enough to make one's hair stand on end—our young ladies had not been used to it; and were unconscious of sitting there with open mouths and staring,—two things which Mrs. Winchum had specially trained them not to do. In fact, the difference between the two schools was this:—in one it was “don’t, don’t, don’t,” in the other—“do, do, do.”

But our girls forgot to “don’t,” and sat there with open mouths, drinking in a new revelation about study. Here, the pupils seemed to answer, as if they really understood what they were saying, and debated the matter, as if they

could even call in question the text-book itself. They seemed to be interested in their recitations, too, and asked questions, and most surprising of all!—they were answered.

At the seminary, the text-book had been supreme law. What it did not contain, no teacher presumed to know; and as to questions—all inquisitive minds were suppressed.

“Don’t you notice the difference, Sophy!” whispered Ashley as recess began.

“Indeed I do! Who could help it?—No style at all!” said Sophia with her loftiest air.

“That’s not it, Sophy! I’m going to learn something, if I stay here, forever. Don’t you see how they recite?”

“Yes, I see that,” said Sophy slowly, “but say, Ashley, shall I speak to that girl again we saw yesterday, or cut her?”

“What is her name, Sophy? I want to know her. There is a style about her that I like.”

“Mary Russell,” said Sophia.

Ashley gave a little start, and much to Sophia’s surprise went straight up to the group of scholars and put out her hand. “Miss Russell, an old friend of Sophia’s, I believe—I am

glad to know you. Ashley Sprague is my name."

Mary could not have known how beautiful she looked, when blushing she answered Ashley's girlish frankness in the same spirit, and gracefully introduced her schoolmates, who stood near.

Sophia reassured, felt at liberty to come forward and renew the acquaintance in her very best style, and soon the group of girls were like old friends.

"Do you know Than?" asked Ashley of Mary, presently.

"Is he your brother?" asked Mary quickly. "I thought so," she added with a pleased look.

"Than? Why, he's Mary's sweetheart," said one of the girls, who had a quick ear for other people's business.

Mary blushed deeply, and put out her hand to Ashley. "I do like your brother very much. I think he is noble and brave; he is the first boy in school in everything,—but I hate sweethearts."

"You oughtn't to get love letters, then," persisted the determined mischief-maker.

"Ashley!" cried Mary, deprecatingly. "Come, I will tell you all about it."

The two walked off together and Ashley said, "Don't tell me any of Than's affairs. He wouldn't like it."

"But I must," said Mary. "All the girls know, and you'll be sure to hear it. I would rather tell you. All the girls here have their sweethearts. I saw Than whip John Fairfax and because I admired him for it, that Nonie Mason went and told him. Ever since that he has noticed me, and the other day he sent me a letter through the school post-office. Nonie Mason is the post mistress; she peeped, and it was all out."

"Than likes you really," said Ashley.

"Yes, but I wish we could have boy-friends just as girls—without sweet-hearts. Have you a sweet-heart, Ashley?"

"No," said Ashley doubtfully—"unless it's Calvert Snyder. I never thought about it. He is just like my brother."

"Calvert Snyder! That white baby-looking boy?"

"Calvert is just splendid. You don't know him," said Ashley warmly, almost disposed to quarrel at once with her new friend.

"No—I don't know him—that is, not much,"

said Mary, "but I think every one of your brothers is better looking than he is."

There were of course in this public school, a great many classes of children, some refined, and some very far from it, and others with all conceivable grades of polish and culture ; just as there were differences of attainments, according to ability, and opportunity. There were some very little girls, who knew a great deal, and some very large girls who knew about nothing, and then there were others who ranked, just in accordance with their years—which was a very hopeful state of things ; for on the same principle, the longer they live the more they will know, which is more than can be said of everybody.

About the teacher too, there was, to say the least, much that was peculiar. In personal appearance she was a neat, pleasant-looking, elderly person, with a soft, white complexion—who held her head very far back, and looked at you through gold-rimmed spectacles. Her hair, which had once been a glossy black, was thin and wavy, and just sprinkled with grey. She abounded in solemn phrases, and the girls wickedly called her, "Moreover Mrs. Phillips," so much did she permeate her speech with that dismal word.

The government of the school, too, was unique, being maintained much upon the principle of a clock and needed winding up at times. There was always a little noise—no machinery can run without it,—but sometimes the pendulum got off and down it went clatter, clatter, whirr, and twang, until Mrs. Phillips discovered something was wrong, and wound up again. She did not often resort to extreme measures on such occasions, but she used to threaten the most terrible things.—“ If any of you dare to stir hand or foot, or cast your eyes elsewhere than on your book, which is before you ; moreover, if you should so far forget what is due to your own dignity and to your teacher, as to whisper, nudge one another, or in any wise disturb the quiet of this school, be it known, from this day forward, I shall turn over a new leaf, and inaugurate a new order of proceedings. For order I will have, at any cost ; and the very first one who disobeys, I will whip, if she is as tall as the stovepipe.”

Whereupon, every eye was taken from the page, to which it had been doomed in that very breath, to take the measure of the stovepipe

which was three times as tall as any girl there, and thus reassured by a failure to reach the standard of a whipping, the confusion began again—gently at first, as if feeling the way. It was usually safe, and the spring began to unwind.

Some of the studies, too, were pursued with unusual aids. When one of the students had puzzled her brain to no purpose over a problem in Interest or Ratio, and sought the help of Mrs. Phillips, that good lady could think much better, if some one were pulling out the gray hairs from her aching head. This was a novel proceeding for a school-room, especially when discipline was low and several girls ventured at once to the desk, and, forming a group about the silver-be-sprinkled head, quarrelled about which could accumulate the greatest number of trophies.

But there were very many things which far outweighed these faults and peculiarities of Mrs. Phillips. She was a most faithful teacher, not sparing herself; but above all, she was an honest teacher and a teacher of honesty. She hated a lie, and all statements that were not strictly true, she bluntly called lies. Woe, woe, to the

girl that came under her wrath for being a cheat, and thrice woe to her who was guilty of any littleness! So thoroughly did she imbue her children, as she loved to call them, with sterling honesty, that there could hardly be found a girl long adopted into her truth-loving family, who would condescend to peep unlawfully into a book, or report false merit marks.

This state of things may be thought not unusual in girls' schools. It is generally believed that girls are angels, given, perhaps, in their early years to a few shortcomings, which they invariably outgrow at the age of sixteen; but the truth is, they are just as liable to be cheats as boys, or any other sinners, for that matter. Then, to Mrs. Phillips' honor be it spoken, she inspired her children with a passion for truth, and they loved it for its own beautiful sake.

As to knowledge, Mrs. Phillips was a whole encyclopedia, from A to &c. There was no question the girls could devise, to which she did not have a ready answer. She knew all about books, sciences, languages, and she knew equally well the best remedy for every human ill,

and—the latest fashion. The Bible was at her tongue's end. She was a dear, good, kind, earnest soul altogether. Though her children may sometimes smile when they think of some of her peculiarities, yet they will ever have reason to remember her with most venerating affection, for the many good lessons she gave them, lessons they never could have gathered from books or anywhere, save from the rich experience of an honest, christian teacher, who was willing to take the trouble to make them better for reason of her love.

By the time three months had passed, and these conceited pupils from the Seminary had remained stationary at the very foot of the class, all their vanity was gone.

“Where are you in your class now, Ashley?” asked grandpa about this time; for she had come home so late, that the family were nearly through dinner, and grandpa suspected something was the matter.

“Next to foot, grandpa,” sighed Ashley.

“Who is foot?”

“Sophy.”

“Not a very dangerous place, child. Keep

it. You couldn't fall far.—But what kept you so late to-day?"

"Kept in," answered Ashley softly.

"Kept in?—What! One of the Winchum young ladies kept in! How did that happen? Was it Greek or Higherology or what?"

"In grammar, grandpa. We all declared we couldn't get it; it didn't have any sense in it; and we staid fooling away our time, and then Mrs. Phillips began repeating 'A gaping wide-mouthed waddling frog Two pudding ends choke a dog.—Three—'

"What's that? Grammar?"

"No, grandpa, but there's just where Mrs. Phillips caught us. We forgot all about our lesson, and learned the whole rigmarole in a few minutes. It was like Babel—all going at once; but Mrs. Phillips said 'Now girls, I perceive a thing doesn't need to have sense in it, for you to learn it; I want that grammar lesson in ten minutes.'

"Did she get it?"

"Yes, grandpa. We were too much ashamed not to learn it."

Grandpa roared and declared Mrs. Phillips was a good general.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MY CHUM FORTUNATUS.

“ **B**LACKBERRIES, Molly!” exclaimed grandpa at the breakfast table. “ It seems to me when I was a little chap, I used to like to go blackberrying. (Nancy what are you treading on my toes for?) Anybody that wants to go blackberrying with me in the morning, must be up by five o’clock, and at the front door with the biggest basket he can carry. We’ll see if we can’t bring mother enough to make her wish some of them were potatoes.”

Such a proclamation from the grandfather was enough to set the youngsters wild with expectation. They could hardly go to sleep that night for thinking of it, and contriving how they would get baskets enough; but midnight found them snoring, and day peeped in boldly, and found them all asleep. Louis was the first to stir, and he tumbled out, right into an enormous

egg basket, which he had put by his bed to make sure of it. He was too much of a philosopher to cry; so he sat there and rocked himself awhile, as the other boys, awakened by his racket, stretched themselves and tumbled out, too. The tussles which they had in hunting out their oldest clothes on account of briars, and the pranks they played upon each other, made noise enough to rouse Than and the girls, whose rooms were opposite across the hall, and they all ran a race to the front door—all but Than, who thought himself much too big to go blackberrying with the children. However, he took interest enough in the matter to watch them off, and returned to the house, wondering why it was that children and old people can do as they please without loss of dignity, while he had to deny himself pranks every day to sustain his importance and show he was no longer a baby.

Mother was up, and had prepared two nice luncheons for them, one for breakfast and one for dinner. She gave them a kiss all around saying, “Take care of your fingers and look out for snakes.”

Grandpa was waiting and had been for half

an hour, walking up and down before the door. He raised his stick when the children appeared, as if he would have made at them; but they saw the twinkle in his eye, and were not much frightened, as he thundered, "Is this what you call five o'clock? Pretty time of day to go blackberrying! The birds are ahead of you an hour!"

Daisy ran up and caught him by the hand. When he thundered loudest, then she got closest to him; and he liked it, although he did not show it. Only David hung back, very uncomfortable under such violence, and almost made up his mind to stay at home and forego the delights of the blackberrying, for he took all of grandpa's thunder as real; but another look at Louis, who strode ahead all unconcerned, with a great basket on each arm and a tin bucket around his neck, reassured him, and he concluded to brave everything. They went on and on, relieving their fatigue by changing their baskets from one arm to the other.

"When shall we get to the woods, grandpa?" asked Ashley.

"The woods? What a notion!"

“Why, grandpa, you know berries grow in the woods. Do you know where there is a nice patch?”

“Indeed I do,—if we are not too late.”

“Grandpa, haven’t you forgotten since you were little? This is not the way to the woods,” said Cary at length.

“Woods again! Who said anything about the woods?”

“Are we not going to the woods, then?” persisted Cary.

“Which did you want, blackberries or woods? I thought you wanted to go blackberrying,” said grandpa, stopping short, as if nothing could move him another step.

“So we do—but—”

“Well we are going blackberrying,” said he, striding forwards. “We are very near the biggest lot of them right now. Who has got the biggest basket?—Pretty well for you Louis!—but you musn’t pick more than you can carry.”

“Why grandpa, this is a market-house!”

“To be sure it is! And you’ll find more berries here in a minute, than you could pick all day in the woods.”

“Oh!—but grandpa!”

“Hold your baskets. Take all you can carry. We’ll buy out the market-house but you shall have enough. No stickers here,—no torn clothes,—no sunburn, no anything but the berries!”

“No fun!” said Louis dismally.

“No fun? I’m astonished. Just go home and show Than your baskets, and there’ll be fun enough, I tell you! That young man did want to come, but he’ll forget now, that he ever thought of such a thing. Fun? Why, yes. It’s just as funny as it can be!” and grandpa laughed such a roar, as made all the market women drop their measures, and stand with arms a-kimbo, looking at him, until every face in the market-house was in a broad grin,—except those of the children. They could not see the joke, but sweated under their burdens homeward, and looked as dismal as if they had been to a funeral.

Than was no where to be seen when they came in sight of home, and they hoped to escape him; but there sat the whole family at breakfast talking about the expedition.

“I think in my soul,” said grandma, “father

would have been in better business to stay at home, instead of traipsin' off to the woods with them children. He's just layin' himself out for another spell of rheumatiz. If he had to nurse himself, and jump around and wait on himself as I do, he wouldn't be so fond of getting sick. I always think I have the hardest time of it a-listenin' to him a-gruntin'. Than, don't lounge so,—sit up."

"Why didn't you go, my son?" asked his mother.

"Oh, I thought it would be a bore; besides, I'm going fishing, if Calvert comes round. Well! What is that?" cried he, jumping up and running to the door,—"Oh, mother, just look here! Here they are, every one back! They must have found the woods close, and berries must have been thicker than snakes."

"Well, Molly!" exclaimed grandpa, bringing up the rear of the toiling procession, "How does this do for an early morning's work? I tell you, your children beat all creation for blackberrying. You'll never starve while there's blackberries."

"Oh, father, how could you?" asked the mother, as she caught signs of the little ones'

distress, and saw here and there a little lip quiver. Now, at her words, Louis could stand it no longer, and dropping his baskets and bucket, he put his head down, like a goat getting ready to butt, and steering straight for his mother, buried his head in her dress and bellowed. David gave a subdued snivel behind the door, and Ashley walked off with dignity to her own room.

“There now, that’s the way with you,” pecked the grandmother, “you never know when to stop.”

“Well, well, if the youngsters take it so hard, I reckon it will have to be made up to them, some way.”

The next morning, there was an enormous placard in great printed letters, posted up in the parlor.

“IF ENYBODY WANTS ENYTHING MORE
AFTER THE DELITEFUL BLACKBURYING YESTER-
DAY, THEY HAD BETTER DIVULG IT THRU’ THE
P. O. TO THARE FREND AND OBEDIENT SERVENT
FORTUNATUS CHUMBLE.

P. S. ALL LETTERS STRIKLY CONFIDEN
SHUL.”

Mrs. Sprague's care in keeping her father's letters from her children's view,—who were a sharp set of little critics,—was all for nothing, as here was a specimen that he had never excelled, even in his happiest moments. She felt worried, for a moment, as she saw the children gathered about it; but then she thought,—“Perhaps it is better they should know him as he is. He will win his way with them in spite of his peculiarities.”

They called to her, “Mother, just see here! What does this mean? Did you ever see such spelling? Who is Fortunatus Chumble?”

“Fortunatus Chumble! Fortunatus Chumble,” roared grandpa, stamping in just then, “What about Fortunatus Chumble? Ridiculous old fool to be too poor to get an education! He's my chum—old Fortunatus. An old fool that don't know what to do with his money! What's this he says?—‘If enybody wants enything’—Well, now, I tell you, you had better speak out, for a fool and his money are soon parted, and if you don't get it somebody else will. It must be just *one* thing you ask for—just the thing you want most of all in the world.—Don't

you tell a soul what you write.—Wish Fortunatus would do me that way, but he is a stingy old rogue with me.”

“ Did you tell him, grandpa, about our blackberries !” asked the children.

“ He heard of it.—Thought it a fine joke, but he didn’t like to have the children’s feelings hurt,—never could stand it.—Never ! Now I dont mind it at all.—Nothing I’d pay you so well for as a fist full of tears, but old Fortunatus is a silly dog.”

“ Now, father, what on airth are you up to next !” said grandma eying the placard, for she had just come in.

“ Don’t talk to me, Nancy. It’s all Fortunatus’ doings.”

“ Fortunatus — the cat’s foot ! That’s the next rampage is it ?”

“ What would you wish for, grandpa ?” asked Daisy, jumping upon his knee, for grandma’s spleen could not divert her from the main idea

“ Me ? Zounds and lightnings ! I’d wish for a ton of cotton to stop up my ears,” roared he, making more noise than grandma and all the children put together.

"Oh, grandpa, you know you like a noise, because you make so much;—but what would you wish for if you were I?" asked Daisy.

"If I was you,—I'd wish for,—Let me see,—I'd wish for,"—

"Listen, grandpa,—I want to tell you, easy,"—

"What do you mean by blowing in my ear—you little witch?" cried grandpa, jerking his head away, and rubbing his ear.

But Daisy clung still closer round his neck, "I had to blow the hairs away so you could listen. What makes you have such thick ear-lashes? Now! Wouldn't you wish for a—" The word went in under the "earlashes," and must have been the seed of a smile, for that was what sprang up all over grandpa's face—but nobody else heard it.

"If I was Silvertop," said grandpa, frowning at Louis, "I'd wish for a box of soap, to scrub my face with when I blubbered."

"I don't know what to wish for!" said Ashley, "I am glad it is not like that story of the man and woman, who had three wishes, and had nothing in the end. I'd be afraid to open

my mouth, for fear I'd wish for something I didn't want."

"My mind is all made up," said David softly.

"What is it Davy?" asked Ashley.

"Ah, ah, don't tell, you won't get anything if you tell anybody," said grandpa warningly.

"What is the matter, Than?" asked grandpa of him, who sat apart looking glum and trying to take no notice of what was going on. "What is the matter, boy? Why so glum? Why so glum? Poor fellow, he is too big to have any wish."

"I have a wish, but the wish is so big I shall never get it," answered Than.

"Why don't you try old Fortunatus? I tell you he is an old fool, and will do most anything in his line, by way of keeping up his character. Better try him!" urged grandpa.

"Oh he did not mean such wishes as mine. He meant dolls, and drums, and sugar plums,—but my wish is more than all that, and I shall never get it," sighed Than hopelessly.

"Well, well! Fortunatus' purse has got a bottom; but I don't believe your wish can touch

it. So if you go in with the other youngsters,—you'd better try your luck, young man! Now my chum Fortunatus says he wants to see who will write the best letter. They must all be neat and nice, have stamps on them, and go into the regular post-office. So you'd better look sharp, and mind your p's and q's. Make up your minds, so you'll never want anything else as long as you live. But be sure and not tell a soul what you wish for."

How could they wait! Twenty-four hours, at least, before they could expect to hear anything; and then, after all, it might be another one of grandpa's jokes on them. But turn it over as they would, it had the air of a fairy tale about it, and Fortunatus Chumble was their good genius. What to wish for! What to wish for! Could mother help them? Oh, yes, mother could name hundreds of nice things; but then there were hundreds—and to choose! Could grandma help them?—"No, I've no patience with such fooleries. Your grandpa gits worse every day he lives."—There was no hope there. So at last they were like to be sick with their doubts, and perplexities, until their mother ad-

vised them to go off to their rooms alone, and sit and think, and make up their minds to something, and then write it off quick, and determine not to repent of it.

“Why, mother, I’ve done thunk and thunk,” said Louis hopelessly; but they all went off upon their mother’s advice.

With Than, there was no hesitation. His heart had long been set upon what seemed an impossible thing. He had hoped for it, prayed for it, brooded over it, despaired of it, a hundred times—and his lips curled with an incredulous, hopeless smile as he wrote one word, and sealed the sheet on which he wrote it, to Fortunatus Chumble. It seemed such child’s play in comparison to such grand hopes as his. He knew it could never be, and he hardly had patience to go through with the addressing and posting of his letter.

David, also, was decided as to what would make him happy for life; but the other children had a great deal of trouble. All arrived at a conclusion, however, and felt happy after it, before Ashley could decide. She thought of a silk dress, bracelets, as much candy as she

could ever eat,—a trip to Niagara was the happiest thought that entered her head, until, all at once, she clapped her hands over her mouth—to hold it probably and keep it from letting out her secret—at any rate, such was her habit when excited, and now she could hardly pen the word which was the very height of her ambition. “Than says he means dolls and candy! But he said ‘anything;’ and he’ll find out I am a big wisher. How could I think for a moment about anything else? So, dear old Fortunatus, if you want to make this little girl stand on her head—just give her her wish”—and she kissed the letter, when she had sealed it, and gave it a squeeze.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON TIP-TOE.

THE post clerk thought Fortunatus Chumble a lucky man, the next morning, when he delivered to him those six little letters.

Fortunatus stuffed them away in his capacious coat pocket and took a stroll about town. He found himself away out from the city on a country road, before he came to a stop. He took off his Panama hat, laid it down under a tree, scrubbed his head with his large handkerchief, wiped his neck, took out his specs, wiped them, adjusted them, and holding fast to his cane, set himself down—his old joints complaining, despite his hearty look.

“ Ah-e-e-m !”

No wonder the birds were frightened, it’s a wonder they did not drop dead, it was so much like the sound of guns.

“ What have we here? This little trick

must be from Daisy. She told me what she wanted,—but take a woman for changing her mind.”

‘ Dear Fortunatus Chumble, I want a box of pants. Your little Daisy.’

“ What in thunder ! A box of *pants* ! She said she wanted ice-cream, and now she’s goin’ to wearin’ the breeches,—O-o-h may be she means paints, to paint with ! Well that’s easy, —Let’s try another. Ah-e-e-m !”

‘ Dear Fortunatus Chumble Esq.,

A live pony would make me forget I ever went blackberrying,

Yours gratefully, CARY.’

“ The mischief it would ! Gets worse !—Say, old Fortunatus, can you stand it ? Did you count the cost, old boy ?” asked he of himself, slapping his sides. “ We’ll see, we’ll see. May be the others are more moderate.—Ah, here is Dave ! I know his fine writing—He’ll be wanting money to pay his debts.—Ha !—Ha !”

‘ Fortunatus Chumble Esq., Dear Sir,—In reply to your kind request, I would say that I wish

for nothing so much as an accordeon, and with that I shall be perfectly contented.

Yours Respectfully,

DAVE.'

"That boy needs looking after! Well, I know there couldn't be found such another lot of neat spelled letters from anybody's grandchildren,—but they do know how to wish for things with a vengeance,—real, solid, substantial.—I thought a pocket full of sugar would supply them all around—but I am in for it. It wouldn't do, now, to take them all blackberrying again, would it, Fortunatus? You might get all their wants in gingerbread, and fool them again,—gingerbread horse, gingerbread accordeon,—cheap way. But I am not going to do it, old David. My children shall not be fooled, and if it takes every cent I've got, they shall have what they want, old woman or no old woman! I haven't got but six of them anyway—Well—well, old Fortunatus, if you will, you will, so read on,—Well here's Louis.

‘ Dear Fortune, The nicest thing I can think of, is a real clock that will tick.

LOUIS.'

And now I have nearly done.—I reckon this is Miss Ashley.—She's a knowing little minx, and I'll be bound don't wish for nothing.

‘ Dear, dear Fortunatus Chumble. A piano.—A piano ! Yours on tip-toe, ASHLEY.’

“ Look here, youngster, do you think I am made of money?—Well here's the last and if it's worse yet, I'll have to slip off down home, and never show my face. I wonder what our young gentleman can want ! He's got a whole sheet of foolscap to tell it on, anyhow,—and just one word in the middle of it,—‘ College.’ Well that beats me ! College indeed ! Why he's got more learning now than I ever had, and I made a fortune out of my head too.—College ! Whew !”

Next day there was another placard,—“ YOU ARE ALL SO MODIST AND WANT SO LITTLE THAT YOU'LL HAVE TO WATE TILL I GET SUM OF MY BIG BILS CHANGED AND GET SUM SMAWL MONEY. IF ANY OF YOU DUZ GET YORE WISH DON'T GO CRAZY AND IF ENY OF YU DONT DONT THINK HARD OF

PORE FORTUNATUS CHUMBLE.

TAKE CARE AND DONT TEL ENYBODY WHAT YOU WISHD FOR.”

"Oh, I don't believe we shall ever get any of them. I wish I had not wished. It's just grandpa making fun of us again," said Ashley.

Nothing happened that day to convince them that Fortunatus was not a myth, and they went to bed a disappointed set of children.

Day broke next morning, but it could not have been that which made that monstrous clatter—clang—bang—ding—pop,—was there ever such a racket! Was there ever such another tumbling out of bed as on that morning! Louis was waked so suddenly, that he stood like one stupefied out in the middle of the floor, where he got at a bound ; and stood in his night shirt, rubbing his eyes to make sure he was awake. Cary ran into a corner and was getting his clothes on quick,—he had heard of earthquakes, and this might be one. David was convinced it was burglars, and ran for the shovel and the poker, with which he stood ready to defend himself. There was just then such a roar outside the door, they knew, at once, whom to thank for their amazement, and being now wide awake, they discovered through the dimness of

the morning, a clock perched upon a shelf just over Louis' pillow.

“It’s my wish! It’s my wish!” cried Louis, dancing about as though he were in full ball-room costume. “It’s a sure enough clock that ticks, but I didn’t bargain for the banging, though.”

“I’d wish your wish up the chimney, if that would send it there—waking us up here this time of day,” growled valorous David, going back to bed.

“Isn’t it a beauty though!” said Louis, unmindful of David’s sneers, and he climbed up the bedpost to his treasure, as soon as it stopped its clatter.

“What in the world is the matter over there?” shouted Ashley from her side of the hall.

“It’s day a breakin’. Didn’t you ever hear it before, little chicken?” answered grandpa, whom she unexpectedly saw striding down the hall. She shut her door quickly, and went back to bed; for she knew it was some of his doings, and that her turn would be sure to come next, if she gave him the chance to tease her.

But she and David had hardly got their noses under the bed clothes, ready for another nap, before everybody was again startled by the most dismal, drawling sounds, that ever tortured human ears—now just outside the door. But strange to say, what was to every other ear intolerable discord, was to David's the sweetest music; and he had on his breeches in a trice, and was out of the door begging and beseeching for his beloved accordeon, which his grandfather held high over his head, making sounds more and more deafening, until at last he resigned it into David's hands, saying, “Old Fortunatus sends you this, only on one condition—that you practice every morning at five o'clock. If you fail, something will be sure to happen.”

For anything else, this might have been a great sacrifice; but for the sake of an accordeon, what would not David do?

There was no more sleep for anybody that morning; and every one but Louis, David, and the grandfather, went down stairs in an ill humor.

“What is this, grandpa?” asked Ashley that morning after breakfast, for she was on an ex-

ploring expedition in her grandfather's room. There was never any knowing where a bag of nuts, or a paper of candy—of course belonging to that silly Fortunatus—might be hid. They had even been found up the chimney; so an exploring expedition was no new thing—especially, when grandma was out spending the day, as she was at this time.

“That?” replied grandpa, “Why that's the old idiot's monument.”

“Monument, grandpa? How can that be a monument? It's only a stack of old papers, all written over.”

“The only monument he'll ever have anyway—the blockhead! I tell you it is his monument, and he likes to see it grow while he lives. It's not a foot high yet, and it has been growing these twenty years. It rises slow. I remember well the very first beginning of it, and this was the way it came about. Old Fortunatus wasn't always such a fool as he is now. I tell you, he knew how to make money, and he knew how to hold on to it—but he began to get old, and the silly notion entered his head one day, ‘You'll die some day and nobody will

be any the better because you have lived. Couldn't you do a little something, now, to help somebody bear a burden? I reasoned with the old simpleton, and tried to show him that he was worth more than all the world put together; and that one minute of his precious ease would balance all the pains of the poor for a year. But he would not believe it and started off on a straight road for the poor house. He loves the poor so much, he is determined to be one of them. He doesn't delight in helping the shiftless, no-account poor, either, though his purse always gapes open like a frog's mouth at any tale of distress; but he likes most to help those who are trying to help themselves."

"But, grandpa, what are these? Letters?" asked Ashley, for the old man had stopped and seemed to be lost in thought.

"Letters? Yes, yes," said he, rousing himself. "The first one there is from a woman,—wife of a good man but no manager, couldn't get along, children like caterpillars for numbers, and that poor woman used to slave from morning to night, trying to keep her children tidy and respectable. Old Fortunatus found

his way to her washtub, one day—through one of her little ones, and he found out where the hitch was. The woman could play the piano,—but there was no piano. If she could only have a piano and give lessons, life would no longer be a burden. Well, Fortunatus found a good second-hand piano,—it seemed just to be put right in his way, under his very nose—it is wonderful how everything conspired to help the old fool along on his mad course! The woman left her washtub, and soon little comforts began to gather about her. She says her children are happier and better by reason of the care she has been able to give them; and that letter wants to know what she shall do with the money she has saved to pay for her piano. And the reckless old fool told her to find out the hitch in somebody's else prospects, and when there weren't any more hitches any where, to spend the money for a monument for Old Fortunatus Chumble."

"Tell me about some more, please, grandpa."

"Don't get too interested, child; remember, I don't approve of these things. If you ever have money, take care of it; take after your

grandfather, child. Well another letter is from a young man, a school teacher, educated, industrious, willing. He had a young family, and all he could do, house rent was too much for him. That was the thing that kept him down. If he only had a house! He got one, just as a loan, and the rent he would have paid he has put by every month, until now, he is ready to pay for his house.

He says he is independent now, and not afraid of work. And so it is, everywhere. Old Fortunatus finds there is just some one thing that people need. Some place where they need just a little lift. Give it to them and they are all right. He says he enjoys seeing the people happy. It's a queer way to enjoy—giving, giving, giving, instead of saving. He says the best of all is to help some young man into business, and if Fortunatus must throw away his money, I agree with him there. I must say, I agree with him there, and it's the only point we do agree on. The very people to help are those who are helping themselves. An old broken-down, worn-out wagon on the roadside—what good would it do to set it up? But a good strong wagon

stuck in the mud,—just a shoulder to the wheel, and it's all right again."

"What's in this little trunk of grandma's, grandpa!" asked Ashley, tapping the hairy sides of the mysterious brass nailed box.

"What!" roared grandpa, quite himself again, "That trunk? You dare to ask questions about that trunk?"

"Oh grandpa—I did not mean to—"

"I know—curiosity—way with you all! I've been expectin' it all the time—tut —tut—child—nothing to cry for—you just ask the old woman sometime to show you her picture, when she was a girl,—Maybe you'll raise Cain. Maybe you'll see inside that trunk."

CHAPTER XX.

DAISY'S "PANTS."

FORTUNATUS evidently designed to have his fun in return for his treasures, if teasing the children could repay him. He spun out the spaces, therefore, between his gifts, as long as possible, and every-one was a surprise.

Daisy undertook to put all her boxes in order, and as she was always drawing and cutting, and scribbling, there never were any boxes that had more need of it. Away down in the depths of an old chest, which she had appropriated in the garret, she found her wish—a box of fine paints. Then there was daubing!

"Ah-e-e-m! I think I must have been asleep," said grandpa, turning on the sofa, and addressing himself to Daisy, who sat near with her painting.

"Asleep, grandpa? I think you have! You've been snoring an hour."

“Snoring?” roared he, “I never snore. I don’t know what to think of going to sleep these last few days. It’s always a sure sign of sickness with me.”

“Why, grandpa. You sleep every day,” said Daisy.

“What are you doing there, kitten?” said he, sitting up and looking at her over his cane. “I’m going to tell Old Fortunatus how you are wasting your paints, and then what will he do?”

“Call that wasting, grandpa? That’s your own portrait. I drew it right from you when you were asleep, every day on the sofa,—only I ought to have had your mouth open—but you are too ugly then.”

“My picture! What do you mean, Miss?” hallooed he, running after her with his cane. But Daisy ran off, laughing, and went on daubing.

The next day a stranger called to see Mrs. Sprague about giving her daughters drawing lessons.

“No. I have no intention of having them taught. I have one little daughter who seems to delight in using a pencil and brush, but paint-

ing is expensive, and she is too young. I have no thought of her taking lessons."

Meester Chumble, ma'am. He say I geef—let me see—a card—, Meester Fortunatus Chumble,—He say I geef Mees Daisy lessons. I have my brize for it already yet. Do not you wish, that Mees Daisy dake lessons?"

"If Mr. Chumble has been so kind as that," said Mrs. Sprague, smiling, "of course I cannot refuse," and she stepped to the door and called Daisy.

"Let me see, madam, if you please, somedings Mees Daisy have drawn."

"What is it mother!" asked Daisy appearing at the end of the hall.

"Go bring some of your pictures here." Daisy went off wondering, and came back with her hand full of her untaught efforts, and stood by bashfully while the stranger looked over them.

"Goot! goot!" he said, "you know how to catch well de spirit. Ah—here—a peecture of Meester Chumble."

"I knew it, I knew it," cried Daisy, clapping her hands.

"Hush, daughter," said her mother, reprovingly.

“ When shall we begin our lessons, Mees Daisy ? ”

“ Lessons ! Am I to have lessons ? ”

“ Yes, Meester Chumble sent me to geef you lessons.”

“ Oh ! oh ! how can I bear it ! I’m too happy. Let me hug you, mother. Right now, sir, if you please. Right now.”

“ I haf engagement dis hour. I can coom at any hours, between two and tree.”

“ Come at two, then.”

“ Goot morning, Ma’am. Goot morning, Mees.”

“ Who was that went out just now, Ashley ? ” asked grandma, observing the drawing-master from her window, as he took his leave that afternoon.

“ Mr. Marghan—Daisy’s drawing master.”

“ I did not know Daisy had a drawing-master.—When did that happen ? ”

“ To day : Fortunatus sent him. Don’t you think Daisy has talent, grandma ? She draws faces now so you can know them. I expect she’ll learn to paint fine portraits soon.”

“ Yes, I’ve noticed she’s a great hand to be

scrawling around : but what can a child like her know about portraits. Ah, you ought to see my pictur."

" I would like to, grandma ;" said Ashley, quietly, restraining her great desire, lest her grandmother should perceive how much she wished it and refuse. " Is this just right ?" she asked holding up some hemstitching which she was practicing upon to please the old lady.

" That *is* well done, to be sure ! " said grandma, examining the work ; but she said nothing more, and Ashley feared she had pursued a mistaken plan, and was considering how she could bring the matter up again naturally, when grandma said, " It was a remarkable likeness."

" Have you got it, grandma ? "

" Yes, child."

There was another long silence. Ashley was so much afraid of spoiling everything by saying too much.

" Would you like to see it ?" asked grandma, at length.

" Indeed I should—oh so much ! "

" Then why on airth, didn't you say so ? It aint often I do take a notion to show it, but

when I do, I like to see people take a little interest."

"I do want to see it very much, grandma. Aunt Letty says you were a great beauty when grandpa brought you home."

"Well, I'll show it to you, child," said grandma as she deliberately folded her hemstitching, put it into her reticule, and fumbled low in her pocket. She took out her purse, and with tantalizing uncertainty, felt among the gold coins plainly visible through the blue meshes, and brought forth at length a key.

"Now this key, child, unlocks the small bureau drawer, you see; and in here is another key. This unlocks the bottom bureau drawer, and here rolled up in a certain way in these stockings is this large key. I want you to notice these things particularly for there's nothing like learning to be careful. Now this large key you see fits the clothes press, and here in this little drawer is this little key. Down under this pile of clothes, is the little yellow box. You see it fits. I never shall forget,—but I defy anybody else to learn the way to my trunk. Here in this little box is this little round Indian

box, and here—you see this peculiar key? is the key to my trunk."

Ashley drew near, almost breathless. Grandma raised the lid, and disclosed only a covering of cloth tucked in securely so as to conceal all the contents of the trunk. She carefully raised a small corner of the cloth, and reaching down her hand, shut off all chance of observation from Ashley, although that young daughter of Eve nearly stretched her neck out of joint, trying to see what was underneath.

Grandma brought up something from the depths of the trunk. It was another box, the key to which came out of her mouth. This was a mystery to Ashley, who thought she had watched matters very closely. A mystery which she put by for future solution. This box contained another key, which necessitated another dive of grandma's arm into another corner of the trunk; and this time Ashley was more fortunate, for she heard a clinking sound as of silver against silver, and as grandma's hand came up the cover got misplaced a little, and revealed a glimpse of plate.

Another box. The key fitted. The lid flew

open, and grandma took out, carefully, a portrait on ivory.—It was beautiful.

“Did you look so, grandma? Did you?” cried Ashley, fairly dancing with delight, “Oh, grandma, it is the loveliest lady I ever saw.”

Such genuine admiration could not but please the old lady, and she said,

“We’ll have ours painted together some day, Ashley. I’ll be readin, the Bible, and you’ll be hemstitchin’. I’ve been thinkin, of it a long time. I had intended to have Daisy, but I’ll have you now.”

“Don’t lock it up—please don’t,” cried Ashley as the old lady laid it back in its box with a sigh.

“Yes, yes, that’s the best place for it,” said grandma, clicking the key in the lock with a savage snap, and resuming her usual look. “All that ever knew me so are gone, or else don’t care.”

“Did you always keep it locked up so, grandma?”

“No,” she answered curtly. “Not until I had good reason. That pictur was painted when your grandfather cared for my beauty. I

did not believe then, I should ever find it untouched for months. He'll never get the chance to look at it agin."

Ashley concluded she had done more than her grandfather predicted, for she had seen into the trunk, and she had raised Cain, too; for her grandmother grew sharp and cold at once—replaced her boxes with a jerk, and reversing the process of unlocking her treasures, made them all secure again.

"What are you doing, child, trying to look down my throat?" she asked so suddenly, as to startle the child, for Ashley in her great curiosity had been watching her grandmother's mouth intently.

"Trying to see where you keep that key," stammered Ashley.

"Well, you may go," said her grandmother in her severest tone.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO BITS.

THERE was an uncomfortably long pause in Fortunatus' manifestations, and Ashley and Cary began to wish they had been more moderate in their desires ; but Ashley was soon left without one sympathizer in her impatience. One morning, when they had been roused out early by David's music, and the alarm clock ;—for David had hired Louis to set his clock at five every morning, and slept with his precious ac-cordeon behind his pillow, so that before the clock was done its racket, David was ready to begin, and everybody thus rudely roused was grumbling in the strongest phrase which conscience would allow, from "oh my !" to "confound it,"—one morning when everybody had been up an hour, there was a little "neigh," in the street, which proved to be from one of the smallest, shaggiest, ugliest ponies that ever left

Canada. Seeing him saddled and bridled and tied to their lamp-post, the children ran to him and were rewarded by finding a card tied to his mane,

“Master Cary

I LIKE OTS

YORES 2 BITS.”

If they had every one wished for a pony, they could not every one have been happier. They stroked him and patted him, and felt his legs, and mane and tail—hugged him, and kissed him,—all of which he endured as if he had been used to it. But when Cary would have mounted him, he objected. He stood on his hind legs, and he stood on his fore legs, but never on all his legs at once.

“Well! I thought a pony was to ride, but this one seems to be only to kiss. Stand still, sir.”

“Is he a live pony, Cary?” asked his grandfather, coming out of the door. “Fortunatus said he was. He bought him for a live one. If he’s dead, we’ll make them take him back.”

“Live?” said Cary, “I think he is alive. He’s so lively, he don’t intend anybody shall ride him.”

“Oh, don’t he though ! Let’s see. Stand, sir ! Won’t you be still ! Whoa ! Whoa ! Whoa !” hallooed the grandfather, taking the bridle and getting louder the more he “whoad ;” but pony would not “whoa,” and nobody could mount him—such a frisky thing as he was !

Suddenly, he was as mild as a lamb, and the grandfather threw his long leg over the pony’s back, and rode off, his feet nearly touching the ground ; indeed he had to hold up his toes to keep them from getting stumped. He did not go out of sight, and in a few minutes came jogging back to the group of children, and tiptoeing his very tallest, he walked right over the pony’s head, amid the shouts of the youngsters.

“There, sir, Cary, is your pony, now ride him.” But the same scene was repeated, pony would not be ridden until at last grandpa said, “Well, boy, I’ll tell you a secret. My old chum got this at a bargain, or I wouldn’t have let him do it. He is a circus pony, trained. You can make him do anything. Got his name in the ring. He was rearing around, and threw the clown, when the ring master cried out, ‘That pony is not worth two bits.’ ‘He has broken

me in-to bits, anyhow,' said the clown. Now he never lets anybody mount him unless he is touched, just under the left eye; and when you are on him, if you should, by any chance touch his neck, you'll be thrown. He's getting old, though, and got lamed someway in the ring, so they put him up at auction, and my friend got him at a bargain. You've had a pony for a long time, Cary, but he has been to the country for his health, and is as sound as a bell now. He likes oats, Cary, how are you going to feed him?"

"Always plenty of oats in the stable, grandpa!"

"Yes, father's oats! Well, he has some other tricks, which no doubt you will find out by experience—only don't break your neck, for every point of his body means some caper," said grandpa, walking off.

"I do believe he thinks I ought to buy his oats," said Cary.

"That's exactly it," said Than.

"If I hadn't wished for — something else, I believe I'd wish for a side-saddle," said Ashley, confidentially, to David, as Cary mounted his pony and went off in a delightful canter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MUSICAL GENIUS.

DAVID and Louis' amicable arrangement came near working a revolution in the habits of the family; much to the satisfaction of their grandfather, whose bed never felt his weight after four o'clock in the summer, and who thought five o'clock the greatest limit of indulgence for young or old, at any season. So he chuckled to himself, over and over again, when in conference with his friend, Fortunatus Chumble. "Why Fortunatus, old boy. That silly accordeon was not such a bad investment after all. I do believe it's going to make smart people out of my folks." And it would, only David and Louis had a quarrel, and Louis refused to set his clock any longer to wake up David. So the only thing left for David to do, was to sleep with one eye open, and watch for day. It was not an easy way of sleeping, and the night

seemed long, but at last, in the dead of night, mistaking a streak of moonlight for a streak of daylight, he, yet half asleep, seized his beloved instrument and lost in rapture, with his head thrown back, and his eyes cocked up to the ceiling, began his music.

His strains were none of the sweetest, ever ; but in the midst of the deepest sleep, they were like the howling of wolves as to music, and just about as welcome.

Even the grandfather, early riser as he was, thought this almost too much of a good thing, and left his room and clattered down the hall, bringing up with a great thundering on the boy's door, with his cane. "What are you about there ? Throw that thing out of the window, and go to sleep."

"I thought it was day !" said David when he had finished his strain, which not even his grandfather's violence could interrupt.

"So it is !—The very last end of it ! I'll day you, if I hear any more of it."

Enraptured with music as David was, he was quite willing to have another nap, that cold, December morning, and was fast asleep in two min-

utes ;—so fast, that he overslept himself, and the house had the first morning's rest for many a day. Six—seven o'clock came, and still David slept. Then he awoke in terror and caught his accordéon to his heart—but alas ! a rat must have gnawed it, for it would make no music, and had a great hole in its side.

Then began a contest between David's patience, Spalding's glue and that "rat ;" wherein the rat triumphed ; for there never was a hole so securely mended, that he could not gnaw another. At last David beat a retreat into the garret, where he kept his treasure in a tin box, and discoursed his music where no one could hear him.

" That's right, David !" said grandpa, " It's some vicious rat, I dare say, who doesn't like to be waked up so early in the morning. You can play away there till Christmas, and disturb nobody."

" It's only two weeks ! It's only two weeks ! Are you going to hang up your stockings, grandpa ?" asked Daisy.

" What for, Moppet ?"

" Christmas ! "

“Christmas? Christmas? What’s Christmas? Oh, yes, I know.—All go to church that day, and see how good we can be. What should I hang up my stocking for? That’s the very day to have it on. I don’t want to go to church with one stocking on.”

“Now, grandpa, you know on Christmas, we get good things. Santa Claus comes.”

“Don’t believe in him.”

“We hang up our stockings the night before, and they are just full in the morning.”

“What are they full of, Moppet?”

“Oh, everything we want.”

“Yes, but this year you haven’t anything to wish for. You have all got all you want.”

“Not all,” said Ashley, with a sigh, and then pushed away his plate impatiently.

“Not all!” said grandpa, turning upon her. “I’d like to know what else there is to want.”

Two weeks passed. Christmas was at hand when Louis whispered mysteriously, “Oh, Ashley—I have got something to tell you! What did you wish for?”

“That’s not telling me anything. That is asking me a question, I think.”

“Well, it’s oh, *so* nice, and you mustn’t tell anybody, and you must pretend you don’t know,” whispered he.

“What is it, Louis? Something for me?”

“Yes, won’t you tell?”

“No.”

“Your piano is in that room, with a fine green cover on it, and a sheet all over that. You can see it through the keyhole.”

“Now Louis! Aren’t you ashamed? What made you tell me? You had no business to. I’m going straight, and tell grandpa, I know all about it; and he will be so mad.”

“You’d better not. He might send it right back again. That’s just exactly what he would do!”

“No he wouldn’t. He wouldn’t punish me for your badness.”

“Yes, he would, he would say you ought not to have listened. You knew you were going to hear something you had no business to. And then he will be so disappointed. You had better pretend you don’t know, and not spoil all the fun.”

“I don’t believe I can do it. I never could pretend to a story.”

Little could Ashley sleep that night. A new piano is a big thing for a little ten year old to carry in her head, with any prospect of sleep. It was too much for Ashley. Turn which way she would there was the great instrument with the white sheet over it. Counting hundreds on hundreds did no good. She could not sleep, for Christmas morning was coming and her piano was in the house. But healthy child nature is more powerful, after all, than the greatest excitement, and morning found her sweetly dreaming.

The sun, lazy as he always is on Christmas morning, had been up two hours and the children had been up four; but still Ashley did not stir. The whole family were assembled, impatient to see how she would receive her gift. The children could hardly wait, and Louis even tried the expedient of firing off his new pop-gun at her door without effect.

At last she bounced out of her bed, and could hardly dress for her hurry, but Daisy was very kind and helped her. Dinah laced her shoes, and even Aunt Letty came in, and volunteered to comb her hair, while she washed.—Three hand-

maidens! It was more than she was used to. Everybody seemed to be in just as great a hurry as herself. They did not think she knew the reason. She felt guilty. Soon she was ready, and went down to the parlor with half a score of persons in her train; and there were waiting grandpa and the whole family, together with Calvert who had just come in, and the beautiful open piano in its pretty green cover.

Ashley looked at it, at her mother and father, and then glancing at her grandfather, burst into tears and ran to him.

“What! what! See here! What does this mean?” asked grandpa, much surprised, but Ashley only cried the more. Her mother came to the rescue, “What is the matter, Ashley?” she asked, taking the child in her arms, “Don’t you want the piano?”

“Yes, mother, but I feel so mean, and I want to tell grandpa to take it away,” sobbed the child.

“Why, daughter? I don’t understand this. Come with me, and tell me all about it.”

“No, mother, I want to tell grandpa, I knew all about it yesterday. I tried to pretend, but I can’t.”

“Well! well! I think in my soul! peepin’ through the key-hole, was she?” exclaimed grandma.

Ashley did not say a word. Mrs. Sprague, much pained, nodded to grandpa to manage the case, and he said, “I think the piano had better be locked up. May be Ashley will learn some day not to meddle.”

“I don’t see how Ashley meddled,” spoke up Louis bravely. “She wouldn’t have known anything about it if I had not told her.”

“You? How did you know?” asked his father.

“I wanted to get into the room and couldn’t for the door was locked, so I peeped through the key-hole and saw the piano and told Ashley. She wanted to go right away and tell grandpa she knew; but I told her that would spoil all the fun, so she didn’t, but she’s spoiled it all now!”

“Well, my young man, I’m afraid you’ve spoiled your fun for to-day. You may go to your room,” said his father sternly, then turning to Ashley, he said, “You would have done better, my daughter, to tell your grandfather

at once, but I think you have done very well for a little girl. Now let's have some music."

Ashley was too eager to touch the white keys to need coaxing, and the whole family crowded around to hear; but alas! they wouldn't make any music, and there was nobody in the house who could play a note. It was not a whit better when Cary pounded away on the bass, Ashley in the middle, and Daisy on the high notes. Altogether they could not bring out a tune.

"That's the way," said grandpa. "It's like Nancy's new teeth—it calls for new everything else—now a teacher."

"Yes," said grandma, "and then the next thing will be one of them there distraction books!"

"I believe I could play, Ashley," said David shyly, who had been standing there, hungrily eying the instrument, so much larger than his accordeon, and with possibly so much more music in it.

"Try, David," said Ashley, slipping off the stool; and David did thump out with one finger, "Days of Absence," "Auld Lang Syne," and other tunes, the very first time, to the surprise and delight of his audience.

“ David’s a musical genius; he must have lessons too !” was grandpa’s verdict, which made that day a Christmas of Christmases for David, as indeed it was for everybody. Even Dinah had a good time eying herself in the shiny wood, and making faces.

“ Has it got ‘Where oh where’ in it?” asked Aunt Letty eagerly, who thought the tunes were caged inside somehow.

“ I guess so,” said David, and thumped that out too ; which set Aunt Letty off on her way to the kitchen in her highest key until the glee-ful tones reached poor disconsolate Louis away off in his room and made him cry harder than ever in his boyish, manly way.

“ Oh, father,” said Ashley, struck with the thought of her absent brother, “ I cannot be happy without Louis.”

“ Well, well, daughter, for the sake of Christmas we will forgive him. Go and release him.”

Ashley heard a subdued snivel as she reached Louis’ door, but she made a noise purposely in turning the knob and caught only a glimpse of a coat sleeve hastily drawn across a pair of red eyes—and stood in the presence of the philos-

opher, who was bravely intent upon pulling up one of the hearth bricks with a leathern sucker.

“ Come, Louis, father says you may. It is Christmas.”

“ All right,” said Louis, not looking up but treading the sucker all round with his toes, “ I do believe it could lift your piano stool.”

David was, indeed, a musical genius, and excelled Ashley through his very love of the art. He was never tired of practicing, and used to sit for hours absorbed in his musical studies. Ashley had a quick ear, good taste and a sweet voice, and it was but a few months before she had learned simple ballads, which charmed her too partial hearers. Only grandpa insisted in calling the piano a tin pan, and in saying disagreeable things about people who wasted their time over it. It was only polite, therefore, in Ashley, when she was playing, and her grandfather came in for his accustomed nap on the sofa, to rise and leave. He did come in of late very frequently, seemed to choose indeed, the very time when Ashley would practice. She changed her hours to no purpose. He came in persistently, and she always rose, closed her book and piano, and

went out softly. One day he said from under the handkerchief which he had thrown over his face. "Go on, go on. Don't mind me."

"Oh, grandpa, I don't want to disturb your nap. I can practice at some other time," and she went out.

Next day, he said, "Don't stop—go on—What is that thing you sing about, 'The Die is Cast?'"

"Oh, yes, grandpa. Do you like that?"

"That's very well. Play that." She did so, and then he called for almost every one of her little songs by name, and after that it was tacitly understood, that he did not come in to drive her away, but to hear her play. Even five finger exercises seemed to have a certain charm for him.

"Fortunatus likes music, doesn't he, grandpa?" she asked him once, mischievously.

"Yes,—Fortunatus—likes—music."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIRST BREAK IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

THE pleasant myth about Fortunatus Chumble was such a flimsy conceit, that every one saw through it at once; yet no one would dispel the charm by saying outright the truth; and Fortunatus Chumble became a household word and stood for the good side of their rough old grandfather.

They never expected anything but thunderings from grandpa, but when they wanted anything, wished for dear old Fortunatus.

The old gentleman must have known, too, that he was deceiving nobody; but he took the greatest delight in keeping up the show of deception, and put himself to a great deal of trouble to maintain his two characters, without letting them betray each other too boldly.

The first time he happened to be in company that day, with his wife, and Mr. and Mrs.

Sprague, he asked abruptly, "what do you intend for Than?"

"We hardly know," said Mr. Sprague, "Than is a brilliant boy. Nothing stands in his way but the lack of means. We shall not be able to let him go to school more than a year more, and I have thought the best thing for him would be to enter the drug store. It is a good business, but it does not suit him to give up school at all."

"Than ought to go to college," said the mother. "He is well prepared now."

"College! Tut, tut! I never went to college. What do the young men do, that go to college! Some two or three in a hundred are ever heard of again.—Brilliant graduation! Splendid essays in Latin and Greek, and fiz—that's the last of them; except you find them—eyes put out with the Greek—moping behind their spectacles, in some country school house. A doctor, once in a while, makes his salt,—a professor don't—sometimes a big lawyer makes a good thing of it, but not every body with brains makes a big lawyer—nor everybody that goes to college, either. It takes brass, principally,—tact,—and a variey of things that everybody does not have. Why

don't you send your boy out in the world, and let him rough it?—make his own way? Necessity is the best teacher. Coddle your boy up, and see what he'll come to. Push him off, and see how he'll strike out. College indeed?"

"Right, too, for onct, father!" said the grandmother.

It was not at all surprising after this outbreak, that Than should receive a clumsy letter from Fortunatus Chumble. It was gotten up as much as could be in the same style as Than's own, on a great sheet of foolscap, and without address or superscription. In the middle of the page was scrawled in large letters,

"COLLIDGE IT IS BUT NO FROLIX."

The poor boy could hardly believe his eyes. Could it be, that his wish was to be realized? Was he, indeed, to see the way to all his ambitious longings open before him? "Dear old Fortunatus Chumble! Dear old grandfather! How can I ever thank you! Frolics indeed! What do I care for frolics? Dear, dear, grandfather!"

With the letter in his hand, and his heart too full for utterance, he sought his grandfather,

and was trying to find words for his deep thankfulness, when the old man, with more of tenderness than usual in his tones, said, "Some more of that old fool's prodigality, I'll be bound. Don't you come to me, as if I had anything to do with it. College indeed! I'd a sent you to cracking rocks. Don't talk to me. I look to see the old blockhead die in the poor house yet," and off he strode, leaving Than to mingled emotions of joy, and gratitude, and amusement. The boy sent a good wish from his overfull heart after his benefactor, and hastened to find his father and mother.

Than was to go away from home. This was the gloomy view which the household took of his great joy. Dear, manly, lordly Than was to go away. What would the house be without him! How could they ever be happy again, and Than gone,—their leader in fun, their helper, their admonisher, their tyrant! So great was the grief of the children, that it almost turned into indignation against their brother for wanting to go.

"I won't cry a whimper if Than doesn't," said Ashley, and secretly wiped away a tear as she spoke.

"Than cry?" said Cary. "Catch him crying! He is too big a man for that. What he ever wanted to go away to study old hard books for, I can't see. I'd like to take a trip myself, but if it was to land me inside of a college, I think I'd stay at home."

"Yes, but Than loves to study, and he knows almost everything now. I wish I did," sighed Ashley. "I'd go with him."

"Go with him?—They don't let girls in at Harvard, I tell you!"

"Why, Cary? Don't girls *ever* know enough?"

"No indeed."

"Well, I don't see that girls ever do much anyhow!"

The family were not usually demonstrative, and rarely gave expression to their tenderness, unless one was sick. Now, therefore, they could not tell Than how much they loved him, and only showed their solicitude by trying to outvie each other in kindly offices for him. There never was a young gentleman so waited on, before; and he began to feel his keeping, as they say of a horse, and lorded it around the house grandly. There was a little trace of his grand-

father in him, at any rate, which only needed favorable circumstances to develop him into just such another person.

Ashley moped and sighed, and cried, when she thought no one was seeing her. She even took one of Than's shirts from her mother's hand, and made every stitch of it herself—much as she hated sewing—and determined to make the whole dozen. This tremendous resolution failed; but that does not prove that she loved her brother less; for sewing was always weary work with her, and now in this troubled time, tears often blinded her eyes, and she had to bury her face in her work, and have a good cry.

Than was not sorry for the failure of Ashley's good intentions, for he knew his sister was not remarkable as a seamstress. He would have looked with more hope upon an attempt of hers to navigate a steamship, or even to make her way through college. While, therefore, he looked upon the one finished garment as a most self-sacrificing token of her devotion, and simply a marvel for her, he was quite content with a specimen of what she could do, and preferred to have the others made by the more practised

fingers of his dear mother. He even declined grandma's kind offer to hemstitch the bosoms.

Yes, Than was very particular about his shirts, and kept that one of Ashley's done up nicely in his trunk, so long as he could find another shirt with a button on it.

As the time drew near when he must go, his mother could not hide her feelings. One would think it would have made no difference, there were so many children left; but Than was Than, and a mother is a mother the world over. The one Mrs. Sprague could least make up her mind to part with, was the one who was in danger. Fear quickened her love. Who can tell the prayers and tears, when that devoted mother took her accustomed midnight round, after Than was gone, and looked upon the impressed pillow where his head used to lie.

Mr. Sprague often teased his wife about this habit of hers, and told her it was a pity she was not a hen, that she might brood her chickens under her wings; but after all he loved her no less for being a good mother, and she always had most excellent pleas to justify her fondness and watchfulness. In winter, some little one

might have the covering thrown off. In summer, one might be sick, or sleeping uneasily and at any season, a pair of little eyes might be lying awake during the long midnight hours, and be glad to see the mother's face.

Than was no stranger to these midnight visits. Many a time had he told his mother of wrongs, follies, or sins committed, and received her counsel, forgiveness, and prayers, during these loving visits in the night.

From such a mother, and from such a home, it was hard for Than to part. As the days sped on, it was an effort for him to maintain his assumed manliness, and just the night before he went away, he lay awake waiting for his mother's visit: and when she came, he threw his arms about her neck, and burst into as big a cry as if he were a great baby, instead of the man he had been thinking himself. His heart was very tender that night, and open to receive all the counsels of his mother and her pleadings, that he might not forsake the right nor forget his Maker, nor his mother, who was praying for him; and when she put into his hand that Book which is the only guide, and asked him to

make it his standard, his counselor, and his daily friend, he answered, "I will, mother, I will."

The next morning, he visited every spot about the old house and yard, and took leave of those cherished objects, whose memory only he could bear away with him. He disposed of his boyish effects, which a college student could not be supposed to need. Among these was a game cock bestowed upon David, and dear old Lion, resigned with a vain effort to conceal his feelings, to Ashley.

It was a bereaved family that watched the carriage roll away with Than, who cried from the window, "If I fail, I will go all around the world before you see me."

Than was gone. There was a great void in the newly-broken circle, almost as if death had entered and carried off their loved one; and it was not until they got a hearty loving letter from the boy, that they were indeed sure he was not gone forever, and the family could resume anything like its old ways.

We are sometimes tempted to think how pleasant it would be if children could remain always children, and the same fresh laughter that

yesterday greeted our ears could still be waiting for us in the far off time when years and change have fulfilled their mission. But still the spring gives place to summer and the summer to autumn, and so before we realize its possibility, the little prattling voices have taken on a graver tone, the glee of childhood is exchanged for the sobriety of maturer years. It is better so.

We have come to a time and place when we are startled to find the babies whose story we began to tell, growing up. Here is the little girl who wanted to be a boy, practicing away soberly at her piano and thinking it happiness. Than, whose chief object in life was a good time and having his own way, plodding on with great success at College. Cary, tired of school, trotting around on a pony of his own and in charge of the drug store between times. David as tall as his mother—but still as shy as a girl. Louis, thank fortune, not too big yet to get into mischief and cry about it. And Daisy sketching portraits that you can recognize! Bless me, how time flies. Why if I don't hurry and close, my children will be quite beyond my control and have their heads full of—But no matter, I shall not give a hint of

what nonsense their heads may be filled with in the years to come, lest some little folks who have followed the fortunes of the House with Spectacles so far may be teasing me to go on and tell them what became of Calvert and Dr. Alden—and dear old Fortunatus, how Ashley grew up and how she graduated and how—

But this will never do. I could never get all these things into one book. If, however, my little audiences will come again, I shall take as much pleasure in telling the story as they will in listening to it; and in another volume, if this should meet with a kind reception, I hope to finish THE HOUSE WITH SPECTACLES.

THE END.

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